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HOW WILL IT END?

BY

AGNES STRICKLAND.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO

THE DUCHESS DE GRAMONT

These Volumes

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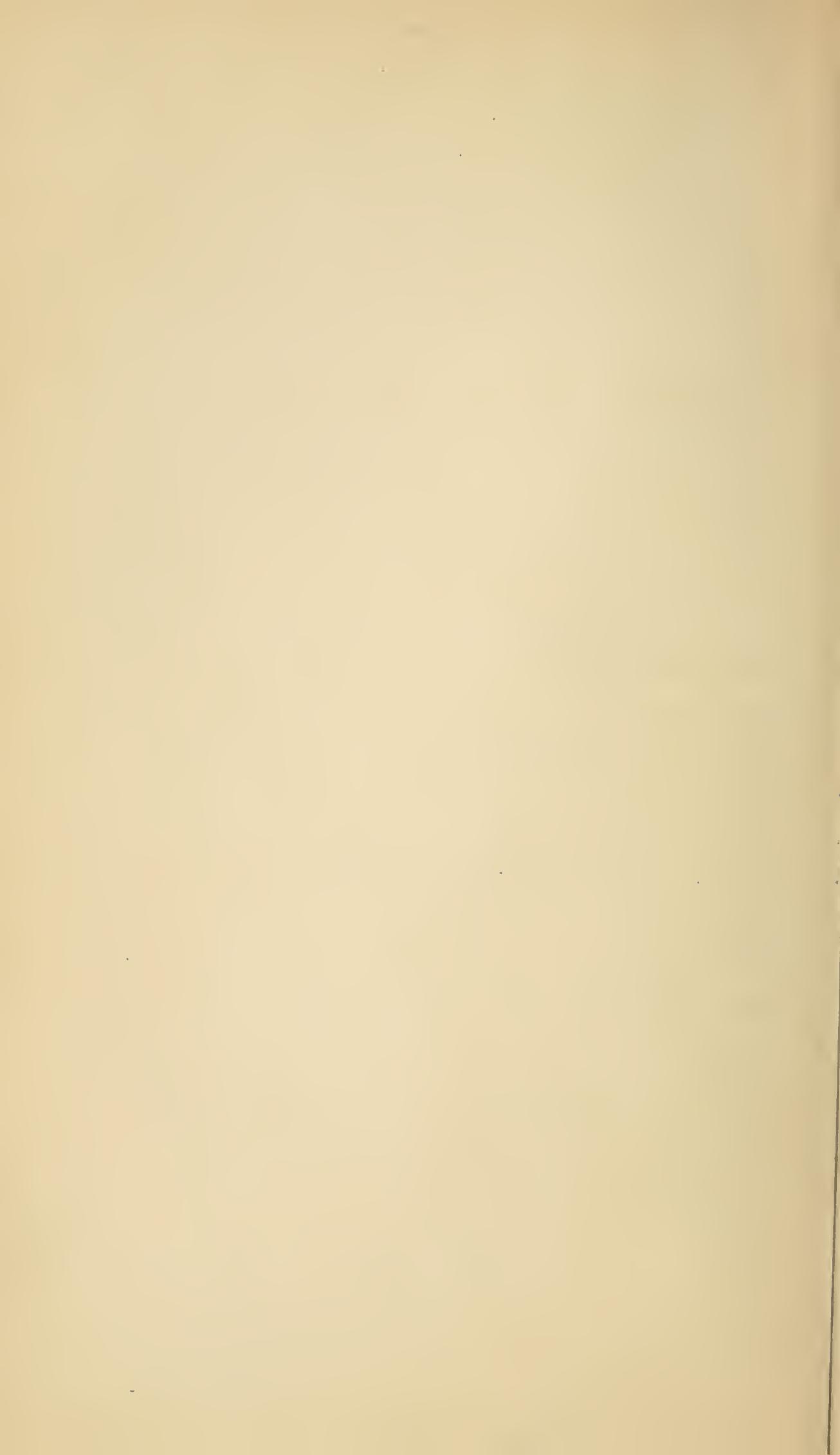
BY

HER ATTACHED FRIEND

AGNES STRICKLAND.

*Park Lane Cottage,
Southwold,
Suffolk.*

Nov. 1, 1865.



HOW WILL IT END?

CHAPTER I.

ONE dreary afternoon in the spring of that stormy season for England, 1643, a coach-and-four, escorted by two armed outriders, was seen slowly making its way through the dirty suburb of Handbridge towards the old bridge over the Dee, by which Chester was approached by travellers from Shrewsbury. The coach was occupied by two ladies and their maids. The elder of the ladies wore widow's-weeds, and was wan, sickly, and attenuated. The younger, apparently her daughter, was a strikingly beautiful young woman, about

twenty years of age. She, too, was attired in the deepest mourning, but the crape hood and cypress cloak in which she was enveloped became her pale fair face and dark expressive eyes.

Chester was at that time the head-quarters of the royal party in the north-west of England, the great artery through which recruits from Wales and Ireland were constantly flowing in, to strengthen the forces of the sovereign. Though not actually in a state of siege, the proximity of a strong parliamentary levy, under the command of Sir William Brereton, had rendered it expedient to guard all the avenues of entrance to the city with jealous care to avoid a surprise. Both the lower and the upper gateway on the Dee bridge were kept closed night and day, by the order of the military governor of Chester, Sir Adam Shipman; and no one from the country was admitted without being rigorously interrogated.

George Lawton, the foremost outrider by whom the coach was escorted, in answer to the challenge of the sentinel at the lower gate, demanding “who and what they were, and their business in Chester?” replied :

“ Two ladies, persons of honour, with their waiting-women, coachman, two footmen, and two outriders, crave admittance and shelter for the night within the good city of Chester.”

“ Who be the ladies?” inquired the sergeant of the lower gate, unclosing a casement in the strongly-barred window, and peering forth curiously at the strangers.

“ Lady Woodville and Mistress Althea Woodville, the widow and daughter of the brave Sir Lionel Woodville, of Lancefield Court, in the county of Salop,” replied George Lawton.”

“ Admit them, in the name of the king,” shouted the officer to the sentinels below. The gates were instantly unbarred and flung open. The sentinels touched their steel caps

and presented arms in token of respect for the name of the brave cavalier colonel, Sir Lionel Woodville, who had recently been slain in a successful skirmish with the parliamentary squadron on the borders of Oxfordshire.

Some difficulty was experienced by the coachman in piloting the cumbrous vehicle over the narrow bridge which, undefended either by wall or parapet, looked down on the broad, sparkling waters of the Dee. However, the four horses, whose spirit had been somewhat tamed by the previous hilly journey from Wrexham, passed quietly across till the upper gate obstructed further progress. The challenge was there repeated, and the answer as before proving satisfactory to the military guardians of the post, the gate was unbarred, and the coach rolled slowly under the heavy archway, flanked at that time with its two dusky red stone towers, and the fair travellers entered the quaint, old-world city of Chester, amidst shouts of “ Friends to the king and his

cause ! Welcome to Chester, noble ladies !” which were prolonged and repeated by groups of the ardent young cavaliers as the jaded horses slowly climbed the steep hill of Bridgegate Street. Loyalty in that city was not only a principle but a passion, and everything that lent a tinge of romance to the chivalrous excitement of the young and brave, was hailed with feelings difficult to be understood in these days of peace and Mammon worship. A strong levy of recruits had arrived a few days previously from Wales, and were halting there to learn the use of arms and regular military exercises from some of the veteran troops in the king’s service.

The business of the parade was just over for the day, and many of the rich noble volunteers were lounging through the streets, and looking out for amusement in company with their new officers, the more experienced English cavaliers. The unwonted appearance of the coach-and-four and its attendants

excited great interest among these. Several of the gentlemen examined the broadly-emblazoned arms on the panels of the coach; but the majority thought proper to indulge their curiosity by taking a deliberate survey of the fair travellers, undeterred by the stern frowns and repulsive gestures of Lady Woodville.

“That cross old woman is the mother, I suppose?” said Lieutenant Gamul, a Chester cavalier, to his Irish ensign, Phelim O’Neil.

“Oh, by the saints, I never look at cross old women when there is a young pretty one within eye-shot. That pale, dark-eyed darlint by her side is a dainty girl. I wonder how long she will tarry in Chester?” cried Phelim.

“What sort of girls are the two waiting maids?” asked Owen Rees, one of the Welsh recruits. “Stand a little on one side, will you? and let a poor stranger have a peep.”

“Come, come, Ensign Rees, no ill-man-

ners," replied the lieutenant. "The maids are well enough for what they are. One is young and pretty; the other a sour travelling vinegar-bottle, like the old lady."

"By 'r Lady! but the old girl in the widow's cap and veil is sore sick," cried O'Neil. "She looks as if she meant to lay her bones in Chester."

"Would that she'd bequeath her pretty daughter to me!" exclaimed another young officer, who had contrived to get a peep at Althea over the shoulder of Cornet Rees.

Althea meantime neither saw nor was in the slightest degree conscious of the admiration she excited; her whole attention was centred in her invalid mother, whose indisposition had rendered it necessary to pause on their journey towards Lancashire, and seek medical advice and repose at Chester.

"At last we are in a place of safety, my dearest mother," whispered she, taking Lady Woodville's hand, and tenderly pressing it

between her own, bending a look of anxious solicitude on the face of the beloved sufferer, as she spoke.

“ We are strangers here,” observed Lady Woodville, in a low, querulous tone; “ I neither like the character nor the aspect of the place, and whither to go I know not.”

CHAPTER II.

THE coach drove to the Edgar, then a very large imposing-looking inn ; but it was full to overflowing ; to the Bear and Billet with no better success.

George Lawton rode up to the coach-window, and reverentially raising his cap to Lady Woodville, said :

“ Madam, your ladyship can have quiet, comfortable quarters at the “Old Pilgrim’s Inn,” corner of St. Werburgh’s Lane.”

Lady Woodville, though the widow of a distinguished cavalier commander, was the daughter of a puritan family, and strongly imbued with the prejudices implanted by her

early training. She turned pettishly away, exclaiming :

“ I will have nought to do with saints, pilgrims, and papists.”

“ Tut! my lady,” exclaimed George, bluntly, “ there are not many saints here, I trow, though belike a few papists; but as for pilgrims, they be clean out of date, but there used to be a sort of them, and the inn whereof I speak was built on purpose for them in the good old times. It still bears the same name, and is much frequented by the Cheshire clergy, which proves it is all right; and it’s kept by Jane Tuffkyn, a godly widow, who goeth daily to early prayers in the cathedral with her maidens, and the house goeth on all the better for it; so with your leave, my lady, I’ll tell the coachman to drive you and my young lady there.”

“ Hold!” said Lady Woodville; “ are there none other inns in Chester?”

“ Two score and upwards, I’ll warrant you,

my lady," replied George, who was himself a Chester man. "There is the Golden Falcon, the Pied Bull, the Red Dragon, the Black Lion, the Pig and Whistle, the Legs of Man, and many more; but they are all full of the wild Irish and Welsh recruits."

"Horrid, outlandish papists, who come to England to cut protestant throats!" shrieked Lady Woodville's maid Margery. "Sure, my lady, we are not going to shut up doors with the like."

"Oh me, my lady, what is to become of us poor maidens?" ejaculated Millicent Hill, Althea's damsel; but she was instantly silenced by her young mistress bidding her hold her peace and not increase their trouble by her folly. Then turning to Lady Woodville, Althea entreated her to permit them to proceed to the inn recommended by George. Lady Woodville signified her consent by an ungracious inclination of her head, and George

gave the word to the coachman to proceed, riding himself at the head of the horses to lead the way. It was with difficulty they pierced the crowd that had gathered round the coach during the stoppage caused by Lady Woodville's dialogue with George. It was market-day too, and the country people who had brought their produce into Chester for sale eagerly beset the coach, inspired with hopes of custom, holding up bunches of carrots, kail, leeks, and ropes of onions, and clamorously entreating the ladies to buy, in a dialect wholly unintelligible to them. George Lawton at length succeeded in clearing a passage for the coach, and it drew up before an antique house of entertainment, with open galleries to the first floor, supported by carved oaken pilasters, surmounted by cornices or barge-boards, whereon were represented in rude sculpture various episodes in the legendary history of Saint Werburga, the fame of whose alleged miracles had, during the mediæval

ages, been the means of attracting crowds of pilgrims of all degrees to pay their votive offerings at her shrine.

Those romantic superstitions had had their date, and were out of fashion ; yet the pleasant memories which the influx of so much good company had occasionally brought to Chester rendered the name of their royal saint and sometime patroness traditionally dear to the descendants of those to whom she had been an object of veneration and a source of prosperity.

No such feelings, however, mitigated the stern displeasure with which Lady Woodville turned away from the relics of idolatrous creature-worship, as she termed the quaint legendary carvings which decorated the façade of the Old Pilgrim's Inn. Nothing but bodily debility prevented her from administering a sharp reproof on the subject to mine hostess, Mrs. Tuffkyn, who came to receive her at the door of the coach, fol-

lowed by a bevy of waiters and chambermaids.

Leaning on the ready arm of her daughter, and further supported by Margery, Lady Woodville slowly and feebly ascended the flight of broad stone steps of the principal entrance. She was ushered by Mrs. Tuffkyn through an inner private gallery into a handsome suite of apartments, terminating in a spacious chamber resembling those in old Norman châteaus, fitted up with two alcoves for beds, curtained off with tapestry.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHEA having assisted Margery in divesting Lady Woodville of her travelling-cloak, hood, and furs, and placed her comfortably in the easy-chair beside the hearth, on which a bright fire was burning, inquired if the attendance of a skilful physician could presently be obtained.

“ Yes, surely, my lady,” replied Mrs. Tuffkyn, “ our learned Dr. Fryar will be proud to wait on her ladyship here, and his fee is never less than a golden carolus, so you may tell he is a great man.”

Dr. Fryar was not long in obeying the summons. His appearance provoked a smile

from Althea's maid, and a look of ill-suppressed disgust from the querulous invalid, who had been accustomed to the attendance of the queen's physician, Sir Theodore Mayerne.

Dr. Fryar was a tall, thin, elderly man, of infinite pomposity of look and deportment, wearing a black silk cloak, with point-lace collar and ruffles, and a muff of lynx fur, which was suspended round his neck by a broad black ribbon. His head was covered with a quilted black satin skull-cap, turned up with a row of white point-lace, he wore large round spectacles, set in silver, and carried a gold-headed cane, dangling by a knot of ribbons from his wrist.

Dr. Fryar was followed by a humble adjunct in the profession, called an apothecary, familiarly spoken of as the "poticarry," bearing a large square wicker basket, with two lids, fastened with small brass padlocks, literally an ambulatory doctor's shop. The interior of the apothecary's basket was fitted

up with trays and partitions, containing bottles, gallipots, pill-boxes, a pestle-and-mortar, a tin box of ointments, of various colours, a small pair of scales and set of weights, a roll of lint, with scissors, lancets, knives, forceps, and various instruments ; the sight of which produced no very agreeable impression either on the ladies or their maids, when the mysteries of the basket were partially exposed by the doctor. After feeling Lady Woodville’s pulse, he called in Latin on Master Polycarp, for certain of his nostrums, which required pounding, weighing, and mixing into an electuary, with conserve of roses ; but first, as he pronounced her indisposition to be “vapours,” he administered a glass of wormwood wine, with a few drops of hierapicra, and a drachm of camphor.

“I fear,” said Althea, anxiously, “my mother’s illness is of a more serious nature than vapours.”

“Why, ay, young lady, as you observe,”

replied the doctor, “there is something more serious; for her ladyship is also suffering from megrims, and must by no means travel a mile further till that symptom hath abated.”

“I have asked my worthy nephew, from Calgarth Hall, to meet me at Garstang,” said Lady Woodville, “and ill or well, I mean to proceed thither with all speed.”

The doctor shook his head portentously.

“Your ladyship will be under the necessity of resting a week in this good loyal town of Chester, and taking my medicine diligently thrice a day, by which time I give you hope that your fever, megrim, and vapours, may be abated sufficiently to allow of your removal; but the way to Warrington is on an ill road for ladies, much infested by clubmen.”

“Clubmen!” shrieked Margery, “they are, I am told, worse than roundheads. Pray, my lady, do stay where we are, all

safe and comfortable, and you can have all the physic you like."

"I neither like physic nor fools," rejoined Lady Woodville, sharply. "Just now you were afraid of nothing but the wild Irish and the Welsh."

"True, my lady, but the clubmen are the worst of all people, without any law but their own wills, and steady neither to king or parliament."

"The fact is, they belong to neither party, but fight to defend their homes, their sheep, and corn, from both," said Dr. Fryar. "They are under no kind of restraint, and I hope no lady patients of mine may fall in their way."

"You give us cold comfort, doctor, for our northern journey," said Lady Woodville.

"Truth will not allow of my offering you any better, madam; and my advice is, that you stay quietly in Chester."

"But Chester is, I hear, threatened by

Sir William Brereton with a siege," observed Althea Woodville.

"And, in that case, Chester will show the rebels she knows how to defend herself," returned the doctor; "and the clubmen will hang on Brereton's skirts, and do the king's cause good service, to keep the locusts from foraging on their farms. Ladies, your most obedient, wishing you tranquil rest and quiet minds till we meet again. I will bid you good even."

So saying, with a profound obeisance, he withdrew, followed by the apothecary.

Lady Woodville, having partaken of a light supper, retired to bed. Althea seated herself by a small circular table within the alcove, and read a portion of Scripture, and a suitable passage from Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living;" then, calling on Milly to bring her lute case, she opened it, and drawing forth her favourite instrument, tuned it, played a prelude with much skill and feeling

and then sang one of George Sandy's hymns, in a soft, sweet, warbling voice.

“Thanks, my child, for your pleasant vesper service,” said her mother; “it is very sweet and soothing. I would, however, that my good nephew, Bartholomew Briggs, could have been here to put up a godly prayer in conclusion.”

“I have no faith in roundhead theology,” said Althea, turning away.

“Althea, you are under the influence of nursery prejudices. I wish I could teach you to think more like me.”

“I inherit my dear father's principles,” replied Althea; “and his creed, based on the precepts of Holy Scripture, taught him to fear God and honour the king.”

“Ay, but the apostle meant a god-fearing, enlightened, prayerful king,” said Lady Woodville.

“It was to heathen emperors the apostle alluded, my mother, and recommended obe-

dience and submission to the ruling powers then in existence, in preference to involving Christian converts in the evils and miseries caused by sedition and revolt."

"I am aware that the advocates of non-resistance and passive obedience to royal tyrants lay much stress on those texts," observed Lady Woodville.

"While, on the other hand, the self-appointed military preachers, who are impiously perverting Scripture into a warrant for rebellion and bloodshed, pass over the apostolic injunctions to peace and loyalty as words of no authority," retorted Althea, "but, my mother, you are not well enough to pursue such agitating discussions, so we will drop the subject, and after you have taken your medicine I will sing you to sleep with more of George Sandy's sweet versions of David's Psalms.

"I confess my preference of honest Sternhold," observed Lady Woodville; "it is what

I have been used to in my youth. Can you not sing one of those he prepared for gracious King Edward?"

"With all my heart," said Althea. "I will sing the 104th to his own original melody, if I can recall it without the score."

She drew her lute to her again and busied her white slender fingers with the strings. The glorious air came intuitively, and she sang the first two verses with thrilling sweetness, but suddenly paused, for her psalmody had reached other ears than those to whom it was attuned, and lively and enthusiastic plaudits from masculine voices greeted her performance.

"I wish that the lady who singeth King David's Psalms so well would carol a love ditty, a pleasant roundelay, or even a simple ballad," exclaimed one of the unseen auditors, in a strong Welsh accent.

"Troth and so do I," rejoined another voice; "but I'll wager that the sweet

singer is a puritan, and escheweth all profane songs."

"Whist, Penrhyn; be quiet, Dolgelly; an ye can," remonstrated a third. "Lo there, ye unnurtured springalds, ye have offended and silenced the lady who was singing her vesper-hymns to her sick mother. Out upon ye both!"

Lady Woodville, who was much displeased at the interruption and free speeches of her neighbours, rang her bell, and addressed a stern reproof to the landlady on the impropriety of lodging godless young men so close to the apartments occupied by herself, her daughter, and their women.

"May it please your ladyship, it is no fault of mine," pleaded Mistress Jane Tuffkyn, with a low curtsy. "Our worshipful governor, Sir Adam Shipman, hath been pleased to billet two Welsh gentlemen, persons of quality, who have come over the border to serve the king, upon me since

your arrival, for they could get no other quarters. Those apartments which are on the other side the gallery are the only ones I had, and it was as much as my life was worth if I had refused to take them in. They are friends of a brave Westmoreland major who often comes here, and who supped with them to-night. They got rather merry with drinking the king's health ; then, hearing the music, they opened their door and came out into the gallery, I suppose, to listen. As it was a psalm, mayhap it may do them good."

"I trust the liberty they have taken will not be repeated," said Lady Woodville.

"No fear of that, my lady," replied Mrs. Tuffkyn. "I will speak to the Westmoreland gentleman who got my Lord Dolgelly and Master Penhryn their billet here, and made himself surety both to the governor and me for their orderly behaviour in mine inn."

The landlady withdrew, and presently returned with a courteous apology and promises of more discreet conduct on the part of the Welsh cavaliers.

CHAPTER IV.

ALTHEA was awakened by the bells of Chester Cathedral chiming for early morning service. She rose and stole softly into her mother's chamber, entered the alcove, put back the curtain, and gazed upon her.

Lady Woodville had passed a tranquil night, and was sleeping calmly. Althea drew Margery into her own room, and charging her not to disturb her lady, announced her intention of attending the service in the cathedral before breakfast.

Attended by Milly and guided by George Lawton, whom she found waiting in the front court for the last peal, she crossed the narrow street, and, passing through the abbey-

gateway opposite, pursued her way to the cathedral, which was about five minutes' walk from the Pilgrim's Inn.

The huge redstone fane, far different in its colour and style of architecture from any building of the kind she had ever seen before, impressed her with feelings of solemnity and awe as she entered it. After kneeling for a few moments in silent prayer, she seated herself on one of the benches with Milly by her side.

Presently a jingling of spurs and military accoutrements was heard, and the soldiers in garrison at Chester, with a large body of Welsh and Irish recruits, filed into the cathedral, filling every available space in choir, chancel, transepts, and aisles.

It cost some trouble to their officers to arrange them so as not to inconvenience the female portion of the congregation.

Cathedrals were not then neglected ; they were still the churches of the people. A

simple but earnest congregation duly sought those hallowed courts before the business and the cares of life had estranged their thoughts from Him who had watched over them through the long hours of darkness, and safely brought them to the beginning of another day.

Althea, whose love for her Church was augmented, and warmed by the dangers that now threatened it, rejoiced in this opportunity of entering its courts to offer up her prayers and praise. She was glad to find herself associated with many an earnest worshipper from among the housewives and maidens of Chester, strangers to her and of humbler degree, but sharing with her in the same feelings which had drawn her thither in obedience to the call of those sweet minster bells.

The bishop, the dean, and white-robed ministers entered, and the service commenced. Althea was in a heavenward frame of mind,

but her devotions were interrupted and chased by the inconvenience she suffered from the too close neighbourhood of a gaily-dressed young cavalier who inducted himself into a vacant seat on the same bench with herself, and pressed closer to her side than the pride and feminine reserve of her character approved from any one, especially from a stranger.

The richness of his attire—a scarlet velvet cloak, embroidered doublet, and slashed satin hose—indicated that he was a person of fortune, probably of quality, while his steel breastplate, gorget and greaves, broadsword and pistols, bespoke him a member of the military muster which thronged the cathedral. His florid complexion and bright-yellow love-locks, moustache and pointed beard of the same warm hue, betrayed his Welsh origin, choleric and audacious temperament.

When the choristers commenced chanting the Psalms, he boldly whispered to Althea :

“Of your charity, fair lady, permit an

unlucky stranger who is not provided with a book to read over your shoulder."

Althea resigned her prayer-book to him, and turning haughtily away, read with Milly. He returned her book with a profound bow when the psalms concluded :

"I have presumed too much, I fear," whispered he. "I did not mean to deprive you of your book; but can we not read together?"

Althea, who was exceedingly annoyed by his bold perseverance, coldly and proudly replied, "No!" flashing at the same time a look of ineffable disdain upon him from under her long black lashes.

Vexed as she was she could perceive that two gentlemen opposite, one resembling her neighbour in complexion, and holding a certain telegraphic intelligence with him, the other, somewhat older and having a loftier and more distinguished presence, were watching her with fixed attention.

When the first lesson was concluded, and all rose, as the glorious burst of the Te Deum pealed through the cathedral, her incorrigible neighbour endeavoured to read, as if by stealth, from Althea's book.

“Change places with me,” whispered she to Milly, with ready presence of mind.

The manœuvre was quietly effected, and she remained without further interruption till the end of the service.

Chester Cathedral has always been celebrated for the super-excellence of its music and choir. At another time Althea would have enjoyed the chanting with exquisite delight, but now the impertinent espionage to which she felt herself subjected, deterred her from mingling her own sweet voice with the triumphant strains of the Jubilate, and assisting to prolong the rich swell of the Glorias, or the thrilling cadence of the long Amen. Intent only on evading observation, she took a circuitous way towards St.

Werburhga's Street, through the dusk-red cloisters, after she had left the cathedral attended by Milly and George Lawton ; but it was not possible for any one so distinguished from the rest of the congregation, both by her graceful figure and courtly bearing, to pass unnoticed. She had been watched and followed by her troublesome neighbour and his countryman ; they were, indeed, no other than the noble Welsh volunteers who were billeted at the Old Pilgrim's Inn.

He who had spoken to her in the cathedral now addressed a humble apology to her for the liberty he had taken in so doing, “ which presumption, madam, hath, I fear, displeased you,” continued he, “ if so, I pray you, of your charity, to excuse the ignorance of an unlucky Welsh volunteer, who hath ont been long enough over the border to understand the haughty reserves of English ladies ; I swear to you by St. David, that the noblest

gentlewoman in Wales would not have taken it amiss."

"Come away, Dolgelly," cried the Westmoreland major, "You are but aggravating your trespass by forcing your conversation on the lady, who has no wish for your acquaintance. I am your commanding officer, and will not suffer you to annoy her. Go to; I am ashamed of you."

"Marry, come up, Major Philipson! I wish you would mind your own business," cried the young Welsh nobleman, angrily.

"My business, as a true cavalier, is to serve the king, and succour all distressed ladies," replied the major, bowing to Althea.

She blushed, but smiled and curtsied in acknowledgment of the service he had rendered her, in freeing her from the unwelcome attentions of his friend.

Althea found her mother evidently better on her return to the inn, but not in the mood for conversation on any light or trivial subjects;

she, therefore, prudently refrained from relating her adventures in the cathedral and cloisters.

Dr. Fryar and his apothecary visited Lady Woodville in the course of the day. The doctor pronounced her much amended, but positively forbade her to resume her journey for a week. Lady Woodville reluctantly submitted, and amused herself during the period of her detention in making her will, which she requested the doctor and Margery to witness, folded it up, and sealed it in their presence, without communicating its purport to her daughter. There was neither sympathy nor confidence between them, and how affection could exist without these it would be difficult to explain; but the bond of nature is powerful, and Althea devoted herself to the duty of nursing and endeavouring to entertain the taciturn, querulous invalid with unruffled patience; the only relaxations she allowed herself was to

attend divine service in the cathedral with her maid.

On these occasions she often encountered the Westmoreland major and the two Welsh cavaliers, sometimes together, and now and then separately. They always greeted her with profound obeisances, but she allowed them no excuse for speaking.

CHAPTER V.

AT the end of a week Lady Woodville summoned George Lawton into her presence, and ordered him to direct the coachman to have all things ready, for resuming their journey towards Warrington, early on the following morning.

“The direct road lies through Frodsham, my lady,” said George.

“I do not intend to go that way,” rejoined Lady Woodville.

“No, my lady? Why, surely it is the shortest way, and far the best road.

“Possibly; but if I must give a reason for anything I decide on doing, I have remembered that an ancient and much-beloved aunt

of mine lives at Holme Street Hall, on the verge of Delamere forest. Yesterday I wrote to her to say I would dine and sleep there to-morrow night, and, therefore, I shall travel through the forest, and sleep at Weaverham the following night."

"It's a roundabout journey," thought George; "but it's ill striving with my lady, she maun ha' her own way, right or wrong."

The two Welsh cavaliers and their commanding officer, Major Philipson, having private information of the projected removal, rose betimes, and anxiously watched the harnessing of the four long-tailed bays, the attaching them to the family coach; the chaining on of the large travelling trunks, and the stowing away of numerous smaller boxes, cases, and bags, in the boot, pockets, and interior recesses of the spacious vehicle; finally, the coachman took his seat on the box, the outriders mounted their horses, and the two ladies, in their travelling array,

preceded by one footman and followed by the other with the two maids, issued from the inn. Leaning on her daughter's arm, Lady Woodville prepared to descend the steps into the court-yard, where the coach was in waiting.

Perceiving that she tottered, Major Philipson impulsively sprang forward, and tendered her the support of his strong arm on the other side. She haughtily waved him back, and beckoned Margery to her assistance.

“Noble ladies,” said Philipson, raising his plumed hat, “I must take the liberty of warning you against leaving Chester so slenderly attended.”

“Sir, I can depend on the courage and fidelity of my servants,” replied Lady Woodville, coldly turning away.

“Pardon me for my unauthorized intrusiveness, madam,” said Philipson; “but you are probably not aware of the dangerous state of the roads, and I strenuously advise you and your fair daughter to remain quietly within

the strong walls of this loyal town till the governor can send you forward under a proper escort. On Thursday, I have his orders to proceed with two hundred of the Welsh recruits, and twenty stout fellows of my own regiment to Warrington, to join Sir Nicholas Byron's levy, and I shall be proud to have the honour of convoying you and the noble young lady, your daughter, so far; and possibly I may be able to send you under suitable protection to Lancaster; or unless Byron orders me on less agreeable service, I may myself be your escort into Westmoreland."

"Sir, I have not the honour of knowing who you are," said Lady Woodville, in a repellent tone.

"Madam, I have the honour of bearing the king's commission as major of the regiment now quartered in Chester, and employed in training the new levies from Ireland and Wales. For the rest, my name is Robert

Philipson, of Calgarth Hall, in the county of Westmoreland — if every man had his rights.”

“ The person, I presume, who pretends to dispute my kinsman Colonel Briggs’s title to that estate,” rejoined Lady Woodville.

Philipson’s eyes flashed fire. “ Ay,” exclaimed he, “ Lady Woodville, and I hope before long to expel the canting villain who has usurped my patrimony.”

“ If I mistake not, sir, you are called in that neighbourhood, ‘ Robin the Devil?’” said Lady Woodville.

“ Oh, my mother!” ejaculated Althea, reproachfully.

Philipson smiled, and turning his bright eyes on Lady Woodville, replied with imper-
turbable good-humour, “ the same, madam, at your service, and your cousin withal.”

“ Indeed!” exclaimed Lady Woodville, contemptuously, “ I was not aware of the kindred. I am Colonel Briggs’s aunt.”

“And I have the ill-luck to be his kinsman,” observed Philipson.

“I have no desire to be enlightened in regard to your pedigree, Major Philipson,” said Lady Woodville. “Sir, I wish you good morning.”

“Farewell, ladies,” said he. “God and good angels speed you and send you a safe journey! I hope you may not have cause to repent of refusing the escort of your humble servant and much-despised kinsman, ‘Robin the Devil,’ and his imps. Pardon me for having detained you, and allow me to put you into your coach.”

Bodily weakness compelled Lady Woodville to accept his assistance; for she found herself unable to ascend the steps of her coach without the support of a strong arm. A cold, haughty inclination of her head was her only acknowledgment.

“Thanks, Major Philipson, for your courteous attention to my mother; she is, as

you perceive, very far from well," said Althea, in a low tremulous voice, as if pleading an excuse for the ungracious behaviour of the invalid as Philipson offered the like civility to her. Her eyes said more in apology than her words implied, for she had been infinitely shocked at Lady Woodville's rudeness to him.

"Althea, no loitering if you please," exclaimed Lady Woodville, impatiently.

"Mamma, I was only supplying your omission;" said Althea, pointedly. "You forgot to thank Major Philipson for his great kindness in warning us of the dangerous state of the roads and offering us his protection on the journey."

"Come away, come away! There is no time for ceremonies, nor do we need protection. The roads are safe enough for honest people, I am persuaded," cried Lady Woodville, scornfully.

"I heartily wish you may find it so,"

observed Philipson, on whom the bright eyes of Althea turned a deprecatory glance, silently entreating him to bear with her mother's petulance.

The mute intelligence thus established between him and the stately inaccessible beauty of the cathedral amply compensated to Philipson for the unprovoked rudeness with which her mother had requited his civilities.

Althea accepted his deferentially tendered assistance in entering the coach, with a gracious smile, and frankly waved her hand in acknowledgment of his farewell obeisance. His two Welsh friends, who seemed determined not to stand idle, with officious politeness helped the two waiting-maids into the coach and shut the door.

“ Oh, by St. David, you are a brave man, major !” cried Lord Dolgelly, “ to take all the clapper-clawing you got from the sour old she-griffin there, in return for your civility, and yet to persevere.”

“ Speak with more respect of my Lady Woodville, I pray you, Dolgelly,” replied Philipson ; “ she is my cousin.”

“ I don’t envy you the relationship,” said Lord Dolgelly, laughing. “ What a bitter tongue she has.”

“ She cannot help it, poor woman,” rejoined Philipson. “ She is a daughter of the crabbed house of Briggs. Her daughter, heaven be praised, inherits the noble nature of brave Sir Lionel Woodville. She writhed inwardly, I perceived, at the ill-natured behaviour of my lady. It would be charity to steal her away from the domestic tyranny to which she is, I fear, subjected.”

“ Faith, major, so it would,” replied Dolgelly, rubbing his hands ; “ and as all law is at an end in this same England, suppose Penrhyn and about a score of mettled fellows like us were to put on countrymen’s frocks, feign ourselves clubmen, ride after the coach, capture the whole company, and

take her and her maid away from the old lady?"

"A pretty exploit for the king's Welsh volunteers to engage in, truly," cried Philipson. "Why, it would be my duty to bring you before a military court for the misdemeanour of absenting yourself from the muster roll without leave, my trusty lieutenant. As for your playing the brigand and imitating the outrages of clubmen, it must not be thought of, my Lord Dolgelly. The lady is my kinswoman, and I am bound to protect her from even a look that would threaten her with dishonour."

"I assure you my designs are perfectly honourable," said the young nobleman. "I mean your fair cousin no worse than to make her Lady Dolgelly."

Philipson's colour rose at these words.

"Her consent will be requisite, I presume," observed he drily; "and it is possible that the beautiful heiress of Sir Lionel Wood-

ville may not be so much dazzled with the offer of a Welsh coronet as to overlook the indignity of being wooed after the fashion of a Sabine bride."

"No detraction from the value of a Welsh coronet, if you please, major," exclaimed Dolgelly. "I can match pedigrees with the proudest North Briton that breathes. Mine is all pure aboriginal blood, no taint of Saxon, Pictish, or Norman, in these veins. 'Ap Howell, Ap Enion, Ap Jevon, Ap Griffith, Ap Neill—'"

But Philipson was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

LADY WOODVILLE'S coach was stopped at the Eastgate of Chester by the sentinels, with the usual challenge: “Who goes there?”

“Friends to the king,” replied George Lawton, who was, of course, in advance.

“Who are they?” inquired the officer of the guard on duty, from the window of the look-out room between the gateway towers which, at that time, flanked the Eastgate.

“The widow of the brave Sir Lionel Woodville, her daughter, and their waiting-maids,” answered George.

“Whither are they going?”

“Through Delamere Forest, on their way north, by your leave.”

“Have they got a pass from the governor?” inquired the jealous challenger.

“Is that necessary?” asked George, cautiously evading the question.

“No one can be allowed to pass either of the gates of Chester without,” replied the officer.

“How is it to be obtained?” inquired Lady Woodville.

“By application to Major Philipson,” replied the officer, and closed the window.

“What will you do now, mamma?” asked Althea.

“Return to the inn and write to the governor for the pass,” replied Lady Woodville, after a moody pause.

“And the governor will, as a matter of course, refer you to his deputy in granting passes,” observed Althea: “what a pity it is you treated Major Philipson so uncivilly, mamma.”

“Such a pleasant gentleman, too, and

so handsome," whispered Milly Hill to Margery.

"Fie upon you, Milly; how can you be so bold as to look after such godless men of Belial as that deboshed major?" replied Margery, who always took her cue from her lady.

"In happy hour here he comes," cried Althea, with a heightened colour, as Philipson appeared in sight.

He advanced to the side of the coach, and raising his hat frankly, addressed Lady Woodville: "I was about to explain that no one could be allowed to leave Chester without the governor's pass and safe-conduct, but you were so curt with me that I had not courage to speak another word. Aware, however, that you would be stopped at the gate, and delayed in your journey, for lack of the governor's pass and safe-conduct, I had had them made out in readiness to present to you, when you prevented me by driving off; but

here they are, I have brought them myself to save you the trouble and loss of time that would otherwise have befallen. Albeit, madam, I have furthered your desires of leaving this loyal town of Chester ; I heartily wish you could be prevailed to postpone your journey, and not expose yourself, your fair daughter, and these damsels, to the peril, so inefficiently escorted as you are, of an encounter with the clubmen.”

“Oh la, me ! will they beat us with their clubs ?” inquired Margery, fearfully.

“There is no answering what such lawless ruffians may do, if you are so unfortunate as to fall in with them.”

“Oh, goodness, my lady, what is to become of us poor maidens ?” shrieked both the damsels : “George Lawton and James Rutland will both be cut up in collops, and we shall all be robbed and ruined.”

“Peace, fools,” interposed Lady Woodville, sternly : “there is no danger, and I

will not be disturbed with your screeching. They would be courageous men who'd come within earshot of ye both. We have now got the governor of Chester's pass and safe-conduct, which is, I presume, good as far as Warrington. Beyond that, I trust my brave nephew, Colonel Briggs, will meet us according to promise, with a stout company of troopers, and bear us on our way."

"Let Bat Briggs only show his long nose on this side of proud Preston, and I will give him a little sport," cried Philipson, with a kindling cheek.

"Good morning, sir, the day wears, and we have no time to waste," said Lady Woodville, bowing haughtily to Philipson.

"Farewell, ladies, I wish you a safe and pleasant journey," returned he, bending a parting look on Althea, which she, who had been accustomed to the homage of all that was gay and gallant among the military courtiers during the sojourn of her late father

with the court at Oxford, was not slow to understand.

“I wish my mother had not refused the offer of his escort to Lancaster—refused it so uncivilly withal,” sighed she to herself, as the coach rolled through the East gate and Forest gate of Chester.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was a bright April morning, Lady Woodville's stout Shropshire horses, invigorated by their long rest at Chester, set out with great spirit and trotted gallantly through Boughton and the beautiful village of Stanford Bridge. Everything was new to Althea, and she enjoyed the scenery and the budding verdure of early spring. Her thoughts, it is true, occasionally wandered back to the loyal city of Chester with a secret wish that her mother could have been induced to postpone her northern journey till Major Philipson was able to be their escort. Their journey was, however, for that day, a short one, for in two hours they reached the fine old mansion of

Holm Street Hall, where they were kindly and hospitably welcomed by old Lady Starkies, the venerable aunt of Lady Woodville. There they dined, supped, and slept. They were pressingly invited to remain, but Lady Woodville, impatient of delay, insisted on pursuing their journey on the morrow, protesting she felt so much better that she should be able to get on to Weaverham (commonly called Wareham), distant twenty miles through the depths of Delamere Forest, then a wild uncultivated track of aboriginal woodland, varied now and then with an open plain of heath, studded with a few shepherds' huts. After leaving Kelsall, they entered on the forest, and the roads became so rough and broken that the horses were soon jaded with the labour of drawing so cumbrous a vehicle as the heavy and weightily-laden coach through a track rarely travelled by anything but charcoal carts and timber drays. When they reached the Abbey Arms, George

Lawton declared it would be necessary to bait, and rest the horses for two hours.

Lady Woodville was with difficulty induced to leave the coach while the horses were baited, and, in truth, the accommodation at the Abbey Arms in the seventeenth century was not so excellent as now. The sign was and is Three Golden Lions *passant*, flanked with a golden crosier, the sign-board testifying that there were all things needful for the comfort of man and beast. Good ale there was, and plenty of it; oaten cakes, leeks, kail, bacon, onions, eggs, and Cheshire cheese, but nothing else: and no one but George Lawton, who always described himself as “a Cheshire gentleman bred and born,” could understand the dialect of either host, hostess, waiter, or barefooted chambermaid.

Lady Woodville, impatient of the delay, ill and unaccustomed to rough it, was irritable and peevish. Althea strove in vain to soothe and amuse her, and perceiving she was

fatigued with the hard benches, assisted Margery and Milly to make a couch for her of the cushions from the coach, and after covering her with cloaks, left her to repose herself, and strolled into the kail-yard to escape from the atmosphere of the house, which was redolent of leek porridge, toasted cheese, and ale.

Five minutes sufficed to make her acquainted with the geography and productions of the garden. The description of these would be even less interesting to the reader than the investigation was to her. She continued to pace the straight narrow walks of the dull little enclosure which boasted not a single flower, till tired of the sameness of her promenade and prospect, she passed through a dislocated wicket into a yard, where she saw a company of ducks disporting themselves on a murky pond, some painstaking hens scratching with their broods on a dunghill, a huge sow wallowing with her progeny in a black

slough ; two of the children of the house, with grimy hands and faces, compounding what they called “a good pudding-poy,” of dirt, in a superannuated frying-pan ; and a coquettish-looking carroty kitten watching their operations with feline curiosity.

The boy and girl, being sociably disposed, invited Althea to assist them in their occupation, and offered in their unintelligible dialect, to find her a wooden spoon to beat the batter. She threw them each a silver penny, and retreated into the house to escape their clamorous demonstrations of delight.

She found Lady Woodville fretting at her temporary absence, and scolding Margery and Milly for the delay in the journey, certainly no fault of theirs. At length, the horses, being sufficiently rested, were attached once more to the coach ; the footman replaced the cushions ; George Lawton assisted his lady to ascend the steps of the vehicle, and resume her seat, half-buried in cloaks and furs.

Althea seated herself beside her, and the two waiting-maids took their places, whispering to each other: “Would that we were well out of this dismal forest.”

The coachman smacked his whip, the outriders sprang to their saddles, and the whole *cortége* started once more, and for some miles proceeded as well as could be expected; but the track became so rough that the coachman expressed fears of reaching Wareham before sunset.

“Bid him urge the horses, George,” cried Lady Woodville, impatiently. “Why, they have come to a dead stop now. What is the meaning of this?” she fearfully exclaimed, as a party of fifty men, clad in the white hempen frocks generally worn in that country, and armed with clubs, scythes, flails, and reaping-hooks, suddenly issued from the covert of a thick-wooded dingle, and surrounded the coach.

“The clubmen, mamma!” whispered Al-

thea, her cheek fading to marble paleness as she spoke.

“The clubmen!” shrieked the maids.
“What will become of us?”

George Lawton cocked his loaded petronel, and pointed it at the leader of the party.

“Fire, and you are all dead men!” cried the sturdy agrarian chief in a stern voice, with the gesture of one accustomed to command.

“Drop your weapon, George Lawton; resistance is madness,” cried Althea, rallying her presence of mind. “What do these people want?”

“The roundheads ha’ e taken our horses, and we maun ha’ e yours,” replied a dozen deep-toned voices in the almost unintelligible *patois* of the country. “Cavaliers ha’ e robbed us of our corn and beeves, and we maun ha’ e your trunks,” cried others, beginning to unchain them from the coach.

“Ye are no Cheshire lads, if ye rob a poor

widow and orphan lady of their duds," exclaimed George Lawton.

"We were working honestly when armed robbers plundered our farms. King and parliament both alike, not a groat to choose between them ; rogues all, so we maun do what we can for ourselves," said Hugh Smithson, one of the spokesmen of the party.

"But these poor ladies have not injured you," remonstrated George Lawton

"No matter ; we canna starve, and we wonna, that is more," responded the man, laying violent hands on the trunks.

"Oh, ye vile thieves, ye pitiful cutpurses!" cried Margery, rousing herself from an unavailing fit of hysterics, and springing out of the coach with the activity of a cat-a-mountain, "will ye go to rob we poor maidens of our caps, our ruffs, our petticoats, and the rest of our womanly gear? Stand off, villains, from my portmantel ; and if ye will be cruel enough to take my ladies' gear, be content

therewith. Sure it's better worth reiving than my poor clothes. Loose your grip, I say, ye greedy loons, or it shall be the worse for you. I vow I'll scratch out the eyes of the first man who touches a rag of mine."

An uproarious shout of laughter from the rustic banditti greeted the fierce onslaught Margery proceeded to make on the person of Roger Pogson, who had got possession of the neat leathern box she called her portmantel. She scratched him down the nose, she kicked his shins, and pulled out his elf locks by handfuls, making the most active use of her talons while his hands were occupied in maintaining his hold of her trunk. At last he dropped his prize to defend his eyes from the fate with which they were menaced.

"Let the wench have her box, Pogson," shouted the captain ; "she has fought for it bravely, and I can't see what good her petticoats and fal-lallery will be to you."

"Ugh, ugh!" cried Pogson, shaking his ears,

"doant I want a linen kercher to wipe blood fra' cheeks and brae. Dowce take the vixen for clapper-clawing an honest feller after that sort."

"An' you had been honest, you might have slept in a whole skin to-night, lad!" retorted Margery, seating herself on the rescued portmanteau with an exulting grin.

"I hope," said Milly, descending from the coach, and curtsying to Maurice Mortlock, the captain of the clubmen, "your honour will take pity upon a poor orphan maiden, and not reive me of my raiment."

"Which is your box?" asked Mortlock.

"That, sir, with the striped cover," replied she, pointing to it, "and the small one there with my best hood, and ruff, and mittens."

"I suppose you have some pretty things in the big box, lass?" said Maurice.

"Oh yes, sir, very pretty, but nothing fit for you to wear, so I hope you won't despoil me of them."

"What will you give me to ransom those

two boxes?" replied he, laying his hand on Milly's shoulder.

"Alack, sir, I have but this golden carolus left from my last quarter's wage," replied Milly, drawing out her purse.

"Spent all the rest in fal-lals, eh?" said the captain, peeping saucily under Milly's hood. Milly blushed, and executed another curtsy, looking imploringly in his face at the same time. The manly yeoman's heart was touched. He was new to the business of a freebooter. Putting back the purse, he whispered: "Will you give me a kiss, if I let you keep your boxes?"

"Sir," replied Milly, demurely, "if you will spare my young lady's things as well, I will give you two."

"I am a lucky fellow," exclaimed the captain, accepting the proffered kisses from Milly's ripe, red lips, and repaying them fourfold; "but, lassie, your young lady must make composition for herself."

“Fie, you rude man! Do you suppose my young lady would endure the like of you?” exclaimed Milly, raising her hands and eyes with a look of wonder.

“Why not?” asked he, advancing to the open door of the coach. The appearance of Althea in her deep mourning, pale as monumental marble, supporting her widowed mother, who had fainted, sobered him. He silently doffed his cap with instinctive respect, as she raised her dark, tearful eyes to his face with a troubled look of inquiry.

The idea of bargaining with that proud, courtly beauty, in the midst of her distress, for a kiss, or even addressing her in a tone of levity, seemed akin to sacrilege.

“What is the meaning of this interruption to our journey?” she asked. “We are inoffensive female travellers in our first mourning and affliction for my father’s death. My mother is ill, and you are killing her.”

“Tell the young lady we are the Cheshire

clubmen, and must have the horses and baggage," said Hugh Smithson.

"How are we to perform our journey without them?" asked Althea.

"We neither know nor care," cried Giles Savage, the second in authority to Mortlock. "We are clubmen, we have been plundered both by king and parliament. We can't starve. We have taken to the roads, and must have your horses and mails."

"Ye'll have to fight for them, then, I can tell ye, my lads, for the Chester cavaliers are coming up," cried George Lawton.

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Althea, on whose quick ear the lively notes of the loyal march, which had so often been played under the windows of the Old Pilgrim's Inn, at Chester, now fell.

At the same moment three or four of the clubmen's scouts came rushing from the forest, crying: "Run, boys, run! the cavaliers be upon us."

“Are they in force?” asked the captain.

“Ay, ay; they’ll outnumber us, and we shall get no quarter if we don’t cut and run.”

“Be off, then, my merry men,” cried Mortlock, “to the woods and wolds; but we’ll have the horses.”

“Ay, the two hackneys; they’ll suit thee and me, captain,” cried Savage; “but the coach-horses are jaded, and will only bring their riders to the gallows.”

“I’ll try that,” cried Smithson, cutting the traces of one of the leaders, and wresting the postillion’s whip out of his hand, declaring he would have something.

Pogson possessed himself of the other, and rode off at better speed than the coachman and outriders believed the tired animals could exert.

Mortlock and Savage vaulted on the horses that had been ridden by George Lawton and his fellow-outrider, put them to their speed, and were presently out of sight.

The whole of the band of clubmen dispersed in different directions, and disappeared several minutes before the welcome troop of Chester cavaliers rode in.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE first object Lady Woodville's eyes rested upon, when she recovered from her swoon, was the handsome face of Major Philipson, radiant with pleasure, and flushed with hard riding.

“ By St. George,” cried he, “ it is well we were not too late; but the rascals have carried off four of your horses, Lady Woodville.”

“ My two wheelers will have hard work to draw the coach on to Wareham without the leaders,” observed the coachman, ruefully.

“ Never fear, you shall have the help of four of my troop and their horses. I'll soon

arrange that matter, by setting you up with a coach and six," said Philipson, laughing.

"George Lawton, can you make shift to ride behind one of my men? and you, James—that is the only way I can provide for you. Well, ladies, how is it with you after this ruffling encounter?"

"More frightened than hurt," replied Althea, smiling; "but all the better for the sight of our valiant deliverers."

"We were well disposed to do battle for you, my fair cousin, but the dunghill rabble went off so fast, they gave us no opportunity of proving our valour," said Philipson, laughing, and pressing her hand.

"How was it you came up in such a lucky moment at the time of need?" asked Althea.

"My sweet coz, I had had certain information that these troublesome fellows were lurking in Delamere Forest, and that was the reason I was so urgent with Lady Woodville not to set out till we had cleared the country

of them ; but, as there was no persuading her to change her purpose, I repaired to the governor, laid before his excellency the information I had received of the audacious demeanour of the clubmen, and obtained his leave to make a sortie for the purpose of driving them off our roads ; and thus we happily came up in time to rescue all these precious bandboxes from their unhallowed fingers. I hope, my Lady Woodville, you will now forgive me for the liberty I took yester' morning in warning you of the danger into which you were rushing."

" Sir, you have laid us under a very considerable obligation, and I have to return my thanks for the trouble you have taken," said lady Woodville.

The baggage was presently re-arranged, the two handmaids resumed their seats, and the coach, impelled by the force of the additional horses, dashed forward, escorted by Major Philipson and his troopers, and the

whole party reached Weaverham in safety, though at a late hour, in consequence of the delay the encounter with the clubmen had caused, and the bad state of the neglected roads on the frontiers of South Lancashire, where turnpikes were not yet dreamed of.

Glad were the wayworn travellers when they entered Weaverham. Philipson ordered the military post lads to bring the coach to the only inn the town afforded, where clean, well-aired beds might be obtained for love and money.

“No room here for any but friends to the king,” said mine host of the Rose and Crown, planting himself sturdily in his own doorway. “Roundhead ladies, whether gentle or simple, may tramp or go hang for me,” he sternly added.

Philipson clapped him on the shoulder, commended his loyalty, and exhorted him to do his best to make two loyal ladies, persons of honour — his kinswomen — comfortable.

Then gallantly assisting Althea to alight from the coach, he tendered his aid to Lady Woodville.

“ My mother is so sore shaken with the journey, that we shall have some trouble to bring her into the house,” whispered Althea.

“ Fear not,” said Philipson, stepping into the coach, and taking the now quiescent invalid in his nervous arms with as much ease as if she had been an infant, he carried her up the forestair into the chamber assigned for her use, and deposited her in the old oaken arm-chair by the hearth. Althea supported her with the pillows which they hastily took from the bed.

“ She is exhausted, and wants refreshments,” cried Philipson.

“ Yes, we are all sighing for something hot and wet,” cried Margery. “ Stars o’ mine, how cold it is in this horrid forest we have been floundering through !”

“Hot and wet,” echoed Philipson. “Landlady, what hast thou got to comfort these tired ladies and their maids?”

“Nothing in t’ house but ale and crackers, oaten cakes, eggs, bacon, and honey,” said mine hostess, in a penitential whine.

“Quick, quick, bring a quart of the best ale, four eggs, some honey, a warming skillet, a race of ginger, and a glass of Hollands gin, and I’ll toss up a cup of hot flip that will revive them all,” cried Philipson, pushing the landlady out of the room to accelerate the arrival of the articles he demanded. Meantime, he piled fresh turfs on the hearth, and presently succeeded in fanning up a cheerful blaze.

The ale and the rest of the ingredients were soon supplied for the flip. Tea, coffee, and chocolate, were beverages then unknown in England. Philipson having prepared the flip, served a cup of it to each of the ladies and their maids, with the crisp biscuits, which

mine hostess called by the expressive name of crackers. Then, filling a fifth cup of the cheering cordial for himself, he merrily pledged them, drinking, “Good rest to the fair travellers, and a safe journey into Westmoreland.” “As for me and my men,” said he, “we must get quarters where and how we can for to-night, and start off for Chester ere sunrise. Farewell, Lady Woodville. Your hand at parting. I am too happy to have done you a service, which, perchance, may incline you to think there be worse company on the northern roads than your poor cousin Robin the Devil, and his imps.”

“I thank you, sir, for the service you have rendered us,” said Lady Woodville.

“Heaven be praised then, we are friends at last!” cried Philipson, bending his knee, and respectfully kissing the hand she extended to him. “Farewell, my fairest and sweetest of cousins,” whispered he, turning to Althea; “will you sometimes remember me in your

prayers? and if I can do aught to serve you, fail not to command me."

"I fear," returned she, "there is small chance of our meeting again, Major Philipson."

"Ay but we shall by the fair lake of Windermere, in some happy day, when least you may expect it," returned he.

"Althea, I am a-weary, and must to bed," cried Lady Woodville, impatiently interrupting the conference.

"Good-night, good-night!" said Philipson, "but hold, here is a pass for Preston, which you will require. Can I be of any further service?"

"No, I am tired; good-night, sir."

Philipson stole Althea's hand and pressed it silently to his lips, made a farewell obeisance, and withdrew.

CHAPTER IX.

THE inspiring air, “Hark, hark ! the lark at heaven’s gate sings !” played as a cavalry march under the windows of her temporary lodging, dispelled Althea’s slumbers early the next morning. She sprang from her bed, enveloped herself in her chamber wrapper, unloosed the window-curtain, and stealthily looked out.

The parting band of Chester cavaliers were riding down the street, and the first beams of the rising sun glittered on their martial trappings, and the gold-fringed banner of the crown.

In the centre of the troop, conspicuous

alike by his fine person and spirited horsemanship, rode Major Philipson.

Althea's cheek, though none was near to detect that stolen glance, flushed with unwonted crimson, behind the heavy, green stuff - curtain, and her bosom heaved, as, pausing for a moment, and looking upward, he saluted the window where she was ambushed, by raising his plumed hat.

She retreated in confusion, yet he had seen nothing but the small, white hand, that partially held back the drapery from the mullioned window of the chamber where he had ascertained she would sleep on the preceding night.

The inspiring notes of their bugles still sounded, but in a few minutes became faint in the distance, and at last died away ; the military pageant had swept by.

Lady Woodville was not so well, but she insisted on proceeding after she had breakfasted. The outriders mounted the sorry

nags which could be procured at Weaverham, and a pair of cart-jades ill supplied the loss of the gallant bays that had been carried off by the Cheshire clubmen. The travellers started in bad spirits; they only spoke to grumble, and journeyed in silence over the paved roads, and at last reached Warrington. They were stopped and interrogated, but on showing Major Philipson's pass were allowed to enter the town and sleep there. There they procured horses: next day they reached Wigan, and halted for the night in that town.

Althea perceiving that her mother's illness was seriously aggravated by the fatigue of the journey, earnestly implored her to remain there till she was better, but, with the indomitable obstinacy which formed the leading trait of her character, she insisted on proceeding.

“ My nephew, Colonel Briggs, has promised to meet us at Garstang, with his own horses

and servants, and then all will be comfortable," said she.

Althea suggested the necessity of summoning a physician to alleviate the low fever and harassing cough under which Lady Woodville was suffering.

"What! and have another solemn, ape-like Dr. Fryar, to dose me with wormwood wine?" exclaimed the querulous invalid.

"I am sure, my lady, the wormwood wine was a very comfortable thing," interposed Margery, "there is still some of it left in your ladyship's dressing-case, if you will be pleased to take a sip to keep your noble heart from fainting."

Lady Woodville made a gesture of abhorrence, and exclaimed testily:

"You are quite welcome to take it yourself, Margery; yes, to drink it to the dregs, if you like it so well: but for me, I'll have no more of the odious stuff; I verily believe it has been the cause of this sharp stitch in my left

side, which leaves me small power of speech further than to say, I mean to sleep at Garstang to-morrow night, God willing."

Althea exerted her powers of entreaty in vain, to induce her mother to alter her determination; representations of the length of the journey, and the risk of aggravating her cough, by persisting in travelling further north, till the inflammatory symptoms had been subdued by medical treatment and rest.

"I shall be better when I am in my native air," observed Lady Woodville. When once I look down on the fair lake of Windermere with all her guardian hills and flowery garlands, I shall breathe freely. Margery, order the coach to the door."

By the old highway it was, at that period, a long day's journey from Wigan to Preston. It was, however, achieved by Lady Woodville and her daughter. There, favoured by Major Philipson's pass, they and

their equipage, and servants, were admitted to rest for the night.

The sun was declining towards the west before the jaded horses brought Althea and her sick mother, on the following day, to the ancient hostelry, in the vale of Garstang, well known in the days of posting as the Half-way House between London and Edinburgh. The roads from Durham, York, Carlisle, Preston, and Lancaster, met and intersected each other there, thus rendering it a convenient resting-place for persons traversing those districts.

CHAPTER X.

No one travelled for pleasure during the civil wars, and in consequence of the dangerous state of the highways, those whom business compelled to undertake journeys, did so in company: well armed, if men, or under the protection of armed men, if females. Unfortunately for Lady Woodville and her daughter, this was the night when the stage-waggons from Edinburgh and Glasgow halted at the Half-way House, on their monthly journey to the south, for their weary passengers to sup and sleep, and the hostelry was crowded from kitchen to garrets with motley groups, who bustled about in the open galleries, peered

curiously from the windows, or gathered round the coach to take a survey of its inmates.

“No room for my ladies!” exclaimed George Lawton, in a tone of dismay, in reply to the discouraging answer from the landlord of the Half-way House to his consequential requisition for beds and a private sitting-room.

The landlord shook his head.

“Not so much as a shak’-down i’ th’ barn, or hay-loft. Thou’st clean mistook thy time, leadies, and ye maun be stark mad to coom to Hauf-wa’ Hoose first Thursday in t’ moneth, when aw t’ world ken its fu’ wi’ passengers fra t’ north.”

“What is to become of my ladies? one of them is sore sick.”

“They maun gang to Eagle and Child Inn, at Churchtown, not far agates, where they will be well cared for. M’ aunt Dolly be t’ londready there,” replied mine host; “I send aw to her I ha’ no room for here.”

It was with some difficulty that the jaded horses were induced to proceed to the inn at Churchtown, Garstang, little more than a mile distant from the Half-way House. It was within a furlong of the stately mediæval fane from which that picturesque division of the village derived its name of Churchtown, pleasantly situated on the skirts of the old royal chase of the Dukes of Lancaster, and Lancastrian sovereigns of England, Bleasdale Forest. The fine range of the Bleasdale hills rose in an undulating sweep in the background, far as the Beacon Hill, which shut out the distant view of Lancaster ; while the deep narrow stream of the Wyre cut its way through emerald pastures, enlivened with the golden glow of early meadow flowers. A grove of ash-trees fringed the margin of the river, and extended nearly to the churchyard. They have long since yielded to the axe.

Dorothy Brown, the mistress of the quiet inn, welcomed the weary travellers with a

reverential curtsy, and a tender glance of sympathy, for she perceived that Lady Woodville was seriously ill, and hastened to warm a bed for her reception, and to have a good fire lighted in the best guest chamber.

Lady Woodville now acknowledged “that the journey had been somewhat too much for her, and that she did not feel quite well, but would go to bed, and resign herself to the will of heaven !”

Althea anxiously demanded if there were a physician in Churchtown, Garstang.

“ Not nearer than Lancaster,” was the reply ; “ but we have a barber-surgeon in Churchtown twice as good as any Greek or Latin doctor, for he knows much more. In the first place, he can do without a ‘poticarry, and makes up his own pills and potions. He can shave, cut hair, and corns, draw teeth, bleed, cup, and blister ; make rare washes for cleansing and beautifying the skin, cure chapped hands, and charm away warts.”

“I will not allow so vile a quack to enter my presence,” exclaimed Lady Woodville, impatiently.

Althea instantly despatched a messenger on horseback to Lancaster, with a note to request the immediate attendance of Dr. Garthwaite the physician, or if he were absent, any other medical man there.

He returned not till early the next morning, and then with the provoking information, “that Dr. Garthwaite had turned cavalier, and Abel Corry, the surgeon and ‘poticarry, had entered the service of the parliament, their ‘prentices had gone with them, and the health of the county palatine of Lancaster was left to the care and skill of two barber-surgeons.

“I must send James back to Chester for Dr. Fryar,” said Althea. Pray heaven that he escape the clubmen and arrive in time to be of any use to my poor mother.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN unquiet day and night wore away. Lady Woodville was worse in the morning. A sharp inflammation had attacked her side, and her cough was most distressing.

“It is a case for bleeding,” said Margery, “and the barber-surgeon can do that as well or better than one of them learned doctors what wears muffs to keep their hands warm for feeling pulses: they has more practice, and common flesh and blood is flesh and blood.”

Even Lady Woodville assented to this logic, and the pain in her side becoming more and more acute, she at last agreed to the introduction of Master Paul Gibson, the

barber-surgeon of Churchtown and the district of Garstang.

A sharp-looking little man, clad in a white linen jacket, apron, and cap, carrying a basket with his drugs and instruments, entered the chamber, with an air of solemnity that might have vied with that of the great Dr. Fryar himself.

“Ladies, your most obedient humble servant,” said he, after making three bows almost amounting to prostrations; “I perceive no time is to be lost here. Her ladyship must be blooded without a minute’s delay; only as it is a case for phlebotomy, she must condescend to let me open a vein in one of her worshipful feet. I presume that you will prefer a ribbon to my tape for binding up the limb.”

Having taken away half a pint of blood from Lady Woodville’s left foot, and applied a blister to her side, he administered a spoonful of syrup of poppies to quiet the cough, and ordered a decoction of horehound for her

drink sweetened with honey. Althea asked him what he required for his fee, to which he replied :

“I always charges gentlefolks a shilling for letting blood, sixpence for a blister, twopence for a box of primrose ointment to heal it, twopence for lint, sixpence for a bottle of syrup of poppies, and sixpence for a horehound drink ; two shillings and two groats and twopence in all, my lady : and if you have any teeth to pull, I does it for a shilling, or pulls two for four groats.”

At another time Althea would have laughed at this primitive scale of charges ; but her heart was heavy with anxious apprehensions for her mother. She courteously thanked him for what he had done, and put a golden carolus into his hand.

“How on earth, my worshipful lady, do you think I should be able to find change for this bonny piece of gold ?” asked he, with great vivacity.

“No change is required,” said Althea.

Master Paul, who had never before been the recipient of a golden fee, crossed himself, and addressed a heartfelt thanksgiving to St. Luke for having sent him such a blessing, spat on the coin for luck, and prayed that the noble lady might never be the poorer for such a liberal largess, and that she might have three husbands at least and a fat jointure with each ; also that the honoured lady, his patient, might have a good night’s rest, and be much the better for what he had done for her.

A decided improvement did indeed appear to take place for a few hours, but it was only a deceitful rally.

When Master Paul saw her the next day, he shook his head, and directing Althea’s attention to the weather-cock on the old church-tower, observed, in a lamentable voice, “There is no fighting against that.”

“Against what?” asked Althea.

“Don’t you see the bird points to the east?” said he, emphatically.

“What then?”

“Did’st never hear, worshipful lady, that:

When the wind is in the east
It’s good for neither man nor beast—

specially when sick?”

“My lady is neither man nor beast, you uncouth feller,” observed Margery, indignantly.

“Nay, but subject to the like infirmities, verily,” said Master Paul. “Will your ladyship be pleased to let me count the beats of your pulse?” asked he, turning to Lady Woodville. “Alack, alack, up to one hundred and thirty strokes by your own horologe. You must be let blood again, my lady.”

“I won’t,” replied the patient.

“No, my lady, no, you won’t then? I suppose you prefer being cupped in the side?” said he, producing his apparatus out of the basket, which was strapped across his shoulder.

“ Begone,” said Lady Woodville; “ I will not be tormented any more.”

“ Pardon me, my lady, cupping is a very safe and comfortable thing. I am reckoned good at it, too; and it is a very cheap remedy. I only charge three groats for putting on the glasses.”

“ As if my lady ever worried herself by thinking of the cost of hoppurations,” said Margery. “ Cannot you see she don’t choose to be cupped, and in the rights of it too.”

“ Well, there is another way of letting blood, when neither the lancet or the cups are approved,” said Master Paul. “ I have got a bottle of the finest and most lively leeches here,” continued he, producing and holding it up with an animated countenance. “ I swear unto you, my lady, that they are fresh from the beck, and never sucked man, woman, nor child before. See how brisk they are, pure and hungry, fit for the work. If your ladyship will condescend to let me apply

three dozen to your worshipful side, and put on a good poultice of oatmeal afterwards, it will relieve you at once."

"Althea," said Lady Woodville, "pay this horrid man his fee and dismiss him, and don't let him bring his hideous black reptiles near my bed."

"Dearest mamma, I wish you would try the leeches; they might ease the pain you suffer," whispered Althea, tenderly.

"Away with them, I say!"

"Very light-headed," observed Master Paul, shaking his head; "wants to lose more blood."

"Vampire, begone!" cried Lady Woodville, angrily.

"I pray you to bear with my poor mother," said Althea, putting a piece of gold into his hand; "I fear your presence disturbs her."

"Alack, poor lady; it is the unruly state of her pulse; and between you and I, my

lady, an evil spirit attends her fever. Well, well, I'll pray to the blessed Virgin to help her, as I am not allowed to use my skill."

"A benighted papist too," cried Lady Woodville, shaking her hand with a menacing gesture at the unlucky Paul. "Idolater, I defy thee and all the snares of Satan, and bid thee avoid my presence quickly and come here no more."

"May all the saints intercede for thy poor soul, my lady, and the archangel Michael defend thee in the hour of battle," exclaimed the barber-surgeon, crossing himself as he withdrew.

CHAPTER XII.

A VIOLENT access of fever was the natural result of Lady Woodville's angry contest with her humble medical attendant, and the climax of irritability elicited by the discovery of his papistry.

Towards evening she became calmer. Althea, fancying she slept, retired to the window, and endeavoured to compose her agitated spirit by the perusal of prayers and meditations from a small manual of devotions from which she had been reading to her mother on the preceding evening.

“Althea!” murmured Lady Woodville, in a feeble voice from within the closed curtains of the bed

“Althea hastened to her side. “I hoped you had been sleeping, my mother. Shall I give you a spoonful of syrup of poppies?”

“No,” replied Lady Woodville, “it is useless to swallow those bitter potions. I feel that my sands are sinking fast, and the hour of my departure is at hand.”

Althea’s tears began to fall; she struggled to repress a choking sensation in her throat.

“Weep not; but heed me, for the moments are precious,” said her mother. “Is he come?”

“Alas! no; I have heard nothing from Chester. James has not yet returned; sometimes I fear that he may have fallen in with the clubmen, or Dr. Fryar cannot leave the good city.”

“I was not thinking of Dr. Fryar. Physicians can do me no good. It is for the arrival of my pious nephew, Bartholomew Briggs, I am longing,” said Lady Woodville.

“Would that I had been permitted to reach Calgarth Hall, and place you under the protection of your cousin, Mrs. Kezia

Briggs; but it hath been otherwise appointed. He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, hath seen good to bring down my strength in my journey, and to shorten my days. May his will be accomplished on me, even though it be that I am to die in this place, and leave you, my daughter, among strangers."

"Oh, my mother! that would be too dreadful. I hope and trust when Dr. Fryar arrives he will be able to restore you."

"Still trusting in an arm of flesh, Althea?" murmured the invalid, in a low deep voice. "I tell you my hour has come. And now, Althea, do not trouble about funeral pomps, nor attempt to remove my body. Where the tree falls there it should lie. I will have my poor remains interred in this green churchyard among the village poor; and when you have seen me laid in the narrow house appointed for all living, I charge you, on my blessing, to proceed to Calgarth Hall with your cousin Bartholomew, whom I have appointed your

guardian, till you shall be of full age. You will find a sealed packet addressed to him in my writing-case, which you are to deliver to him when he arrives, in case my summons comes before his advent. These are my last commands, Althea, possibly my last words—will you promise to observe them?"

"As far as I am able," sobbed Althea.

"Then may God's blessing and mine be upon you," said Lady Woodville, in a feeble voice, sinking back on her pillow. "Hark! what is that?" she suddenly exclaimed, starting up in the bed as the trampling of horses was heard in the inn yard.

"James and Dr. Fryar, from Chester, I hope," cried Althea.

"Colonel Briggs, my lady, has arrived and is craving to wait upon your ladyship," exclaimed Margery. "Will it please you to see him?"

"Yes, by all means!" gasped Lady Woodville, in a hoarse voice.

A heavy military step approached; the

door opened, and a tall swart man in a buff leatherne doublet and steel breastplate, with closely-cropped black hair, strode into the chamber. Althea uttered a piercing cry and sank fainting on the ground, for the cold damp hand she was holding became heavy and nerveless in her own. Lady Woodville had expired in the effort of expanding her death-darkened eyes to gaze upon her nephew, as he approached her bed.

“Ha, too late!” ejaculated Colonel Briggs, looking steadfastly on the face of the dead. “We were not then appointed to meet on this earth.”

Margery ran screaming for help to Mrs. Dorothy Brown, who assisted to remove the still insensible Althea from the room.

Milly undressed her lady, put her into bed, administered restoratives, and locking the door against all intruders, forbade her to be disturbed, and watched besides her all night.

CHAPTER XIII.

EARLY the next morning Althea was roused from the indulgence of her sorrow by a message from Colonel Briggs, requesting a conference. Aware that it would be necessary to settle their arrangements for the last sad duties to her mother's remains, she bathed her tear-swollen eyes and bade Milly arrange her dress—it was the deep mourning she still wore for her father. Composing herself as well as under the circumstances she could, she entered the dusky parlour where Colonel Briggs was waiting to receive her.

He was standing with his back to the hearth, leaning his gaunt form against the

chimney-piece. The dislike which Althea had been so unreasonable as to conceive for him unseen, was not diminished by the awful event which had occurred in the first moment of their meeting.

Absorbed by her grief and terror, she could scarcely have been said to have seen him on the preceding evening in the chamber of death, the fact that as he entered her mother died, was sufficient to connect her impressions of him with images of horror.

A momentary glance at his low retreating forehead, swart, contracted brow, harsh features, and forbidding expression, as she entered, increased the unfavourable ideas with which she had been prepared to look upon her roundhead cousin. Smothering, however, out of respect for her newly deceased mother her instinctive feelings of antipathy, she advanced and presented the sealed packet addressed to him by that lady. He received it with a solemn bow, and taking the

shrinking Althea by the hand drew her to him, and, according to the custom which their near relationship and the fashion of that time sanctioned, imprinted a kiss on her lips.

Althea recoiled with an ill-suppressed shudder from the caress, and retreating to a distant chair covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept silently.

Briggs considered it incumbent on him to address an extempore sermonet to her on the duty of resigning herself to the will of God, and the sinfulness of weeping overmuch. Althea sobbed aloud.

“ Verily, cousin,” said he, “ this is perverse rebellion, which savoureth not of the godly nature of so holy a woman as your pious mother, my lamented aunt.”

Althea’s sobs redoubled.

“ Well,” said he, “ hast thou no edifying particulars to relate of her death-bed, cousin?”

Althea lifted up her voice and wept.

“ Did she not testify?” pursued he.

No answer.

“ Ah, I see, thou art afflicted overmuch by this visitation, and it is an awful thing to look upon death while in the pride and bloom of youth. There is no preacher like the grave for the young and thoughtless, especially if they be, as peradventure thou art, an unconverted vessel. But, by the grace of God we shall make a new creature of thee at Calgarth Hall.”

Finding Althea still silent, he cut the black ribbons which surrounded the packet she had given him, broke the seals which secured it, and proceeded to make himself master of its contents.

When he had perused the document, he addressed Althea in these words :

“ This paper is a testamentary memorial, written throughout by the hand of mine honoured aunt, your late pious and now deeply lamented mother, dame Miriam Woodville, at the time she was at Chester, and

is legally executed, signed, and witnessed, as you are probably aware, by Margery Mumford, her waiting-woman, and Erasmus Fryar, her physician, who testifieth that she is in a sound state of mind, though of sickly body, at the time of executing this document, to which she constituteth me her sole executor and trustee, and also guardian to yourself, her only daughter by her late husband Sir Lionel Woodville, knight of Lancefield Court, in the county of Salop. And furthermore, it is her will that you reside in my mansion of Calgarth Hall, in the county of Westmoreland, under the care and guidance of my sister Mrs. Kezia Briggs, and my protection and authority until you shall arrive at full legal majority by completing your twenty-first year ; and she adds her maternal injunction that you shall render all proper respect and dutiful attention to the advice and directions of myself and my said sister, Mistress Kezia Briggs, and not presume to contract matrimony without

our consent and full approval, but lend a docile ear to our cousinly counsel in that behalf.

“ Mine honoured aunt deviseth the whole of her property, real and personal to you, for your sole and separate use with the exception of the trifling legacies of a thousand pounds to self, and the like sum to my sister Mistress Kezia Briggs; a hundred pounds, a year’s wages, and her wardrobe, to her waiting-maid, Margery Mumford, and a few trifling sums to her other servants. She desireth that she may be buried in the parish churchyard of the place where it may be the will of God that she should die, and that no vain pomps may be used at her funeral, and that her interment may take place with as little delay as possible after her decease.

“ This, madam, is the substance in brief, of your late mother’s last will and testament, which you are free to peruse; also to have a faithful copy made for your private considera-

tion, information, and admonition, by an official notary."

After Colonel Briggs had finished his recital, Althea who had wept passionately all the time, bowed her head in token of her acquiescence with the announcement of her deceased mother's arrangements, and rose to effect her escape to the sanctuary of her own apartment. Briggs detained her to read the memorandum he had drawn up, of the manner and order of the funeral, the description of the coffin he proposed to order, the depth of the grave, and the text of the funeral sermon he considered suitable to be preached on the occasion.

He decided that the funeral was to be solemnized on the third day after the decease, and that Althea was to perform her journey to Calgarth Hall, with himself, and escorted by his own servants, the morning after that mournful duty had been performed.

In the twilight of that lovely April evening

Althea stole forth, attended by her maid and George Lawton, to choose the spot in the churchyard where the mortal remains of her mother were to be deposited.

After she had made her melancholy selection, she seated herself on the green turf, and wept, as the consciousness pressed on her heart, that with all wealth, rank, youth, and beauty could give, she was now alone in the world, without one kind and sympathizing bosom near, on which to shed those tears that now overflowed her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON the appointed day the funeral of Lady Woodville took place, but without the rites of the Church of England.

The coffin was borne from the hostelry where she died by six of the roundhead troopers, wearing black cloaks over their belted buff military garb. The procession was headed by Briggs's quarter-master, and favourite serving-man, Bethuliel Borcham, and Samuel Stunner, the precentor of his domestic chapel, and leader of his regimental choir. These two puritan vocalists commenced chanting Sternhold and Hopkins' version of the burial psalm, "at the lifting,"

as the removal of the coffin was called, and continued to sing in a loud, doleful cadence, in which they were joined by the bearers, and Colonel Briggs's men, who walked on either side the bier.

Althea, who had determined to pay the remains of her mother a farewell mark of affection and respect, followed as chief mourner, leaning on the arm of Colonel Briggs, and followed by the two waiting women. George Lawton, and the other men-servants of the deceased lady, brought up the rear.

“There must be some mistake,” whispered Althea to Colonel Briggs, when they reached the churchyard gate, for no white-robed priest met the body there to recite the holy versicles, declaring the assurance of a Redeemer, and a blessed resurrection for the believer after death.

“It is all right,” replied Briggs, “this is no popish or prelatical mass for the dead,

but a Christian burial, such as my good aunt would have preferred."

"Where, where is the priest?" asked Althea.

"In Lancaster Castle," replied Briggs, coolly.

She would have receded with a look of horror, but he drew her forcibly onward till they reached the grave, when, dropping her arm, he advanced to the head of the coffin and pulling his hat over his brow, delivered a long extempore homily, on the blessedness of the elect and predestinated children of grace, and the utter reprobation and misery of all others. The body was then committed to the earth in silence, broken only by the stifled sobs of Althea, who had neither been edified nor consoled by the burial rite, if such it might be called.

The next day so heavy a rain set in that Colonel Briggs, impatient as he was to return to Calgarth Hall, declared it was

impossible to perform the journey in such weather.

In the course of that day Althea felt her desolation and loneliness most painfully, but it was not completed till the evening, when Colonel Briggs, whose company she had carefully eschewed, by taking her meals in her own chamber, demanded a conference. "I wonder on what unpleasant subject it is?" thought she, as she slowly and reluctantly descended from her sanctuary, and was ushered by Bethuliel into the sitting-room, where Colonel Briggs was waiting for her.

"Cousin Althea," said he, "the weather has been otherwise than suitable for our homeward journey, which is perforce deferred till to-morrow, which I hope may be fairer, but in the mean season, I have been occupied in improving the leisure, by transacting a necessary business connected with you."

"What is that?" asked Althea.

"I have discharged George Lawton, and

four other men-servants, pertaining to your late mother, mine honoured aunt, who attended her from Lancefield Court hither, and in consequence of her lamented decease have become useless and expensive supernumeraries."

"Colonel Briggs," said Althea, her pale cheek flushing as she spoke, "my position and fortune entitle me to keep my own coachman, footman, and outriders, though I have had the misfortune to lose my last surviving parent, and I will not consent to be deprived of the old faithful servants, who have been in the family before I was born."

"You forget, cousin Althea, that I am your guardian, and the executor of your late mother, invested with full powers to act for you, according to the best of my judgment," said Colonel Briggs. "You will reside under my roof during your minority, and will enjoy the use of my servants and carriages, at Calgarth Hall. I have room

there for no more. Those whom you most unreasonably wish to bring with you are a company of godless and malignant fellows, who shall never darken my doors. They have chode with my people already, which is another reason for the step I have taken in dismissing them."

" You have taken a most unjustifiable liberty, Colonel Briggs," replied Althea, indignantly.

" I am sorry you think so, cousin Althea, but it is a necessary exercise of my office as your guardian," said Colonel Briggs ; " and I have also been constrained to remove from your service that very light-minded and ill-conducted damsel, Millicent Hill."

" You do not mean to say you have presumed to deprive me of my own maid?" exclaimed Althea, in angry surprise. " I will not submit to be treated thus."

" Verily, cousin, she is not meet to be about you. Do you know, I detected her in

familiar discourse with a notorious malignant, about an hour ago, in yonder ashen grove, notwithstanding the down-pouring rain; and when I rebuked her for the evil company she kept, she defied me, and swore by her yea and nay, that Major Philipson—for it was no other than that deboshed cavalier, whom men call ‘Robin the Devil,’—was better company than myself, and that there were I know not how many of his followers within hail, ready to take her part, and if I were uncivil to her would break my head, or fling me into the Wyre.”

“ So then,” observed Althea, “ it is a private quarrel between you and Milly, originating in jealousy of the cavalier officer, whose company she preferred to yours.”

“ Madam,” retorted the colonel, who was highly provoked at the insinuation, “ you are as malapert as your maid, and it behoves me to separate so unhallowed a league at once.”

“I will not be deprived of the services of my faithful personal attendant,” said Althea.

“Howbeit,” rejoined Briggs, “I have discharged her, paying her her wages according to the last quarter’s entry in my good aunt’s household-book.”

“I protest against your tyrannous and impertinent interference, in removing, the very day after my mother’s funeral, the attendant she had chosen for me,” cried Althea, bursting into tears. “But I will not resign her at your bidding, for I like her well; and a gentlewoman of my condition cannot be without a maid.”

“You can take your late mother’s maid in her place, Margery Mumford, a godly, discreet person, and not too young,” said Briggs.

“I do not like Margery Mumford, and will none of her,” said Althea, resolutely. “I am satisfied with my own maid, and require her attendance.”

“I am sorry you take the matter so evilly, but I cannot allow such a Jezebel to go with you to Calgarth Hall.”

“I do not wish to go to Calgarth Hall,” exclaimed Althea. “I will return to Lancefield Court, with my servants.”

“You forget that you are not your own mistress, cousin Althea,” said Briggs; “you are a minor, and my ward, and must be directed in all things by me, according to the will of your late mother.”

“Truly, this is a sore beginning,” sighed the young lady as she left the room, feeling unable to represss her hysterical emotion.

CHAPTER XV.

ON entering the sanctuary of her own apartment, Althea was agreeably surprised by the appearance of her maid.

“ Ah, my good Milly,” she exclaimed, smiling through her tears, “ are you here? I feared I should see you no more. Colonel Briggs said he had dismissed you from my service.”

“ He tried to do so,” replied Milly, “ but I would not go at his bidding, and leave my own dear lady unprotected in his hands.”

“ Colonel Briggs tried to force me to take Margery in your place, too,” said Althea.

“ Ha, ha !” cried Milly, “ the roundhead

colonel is a cleverer man than I take him for if he can induce Margery to cross o'er sands with him, for it is her intention to receive her lady's legacy, and go back into Shropshire, and live at her ease."

" You think then he will not be able to force her upon me."

" Not he, forsooth; for though she used to talk puritan to curry favour with her poor dear lady, and pretend to like roundheads, it was before she knew what dismal people they were, and now she says that if Colonel Briggs, and his men, Bethuliel, Samuel Stunner, and the rest of the scarecrows, what are now singing psalms in the tap-room, are a sample of them kind of folks, she wouldn't be doomed to spend a week under the same roof with them for fifty pounds a day, and so she will tell Colonel Briggs."

" So far so well," said Althea; " but, Milly, what is the strange story about you and Major Philipson being in the ashen

grove together, which, if true, was not very proper."

"It was on your business, my lady, and I have been seeking in vain for an opportunity of telling you, how that horrid Colonel Briggs had the door barred which led to your chamber, so that I could not come to you ; and it was not till about ten minutes ago that I persuaded the landlady to let me up the back way. He did not mean me to see you again ; but it will take a cleverer man than he to part me from you now."

"But you have not explained about Major Philipson, and what led to your conference with him," said Althea. "I wist not that he was in this neighbourhood."

"Neither did I," returned Milly, "till I saw him yesterday at my lady's funeral."

"At my mother's funeral?" exclaimed Althea. "Impossible!"

"He did not follow the bier, my lady, but he was looking on all the time at a little

distance among the crowd, disguised as a puritan, with all his flowing locks tucked up under one of their old steeple-crowned hats, and a Geneva cloak and bands. I should not have known him myself from one of them, for he pulled down such a long face, if I had not caught the glance of his blue eye."

"Really, Milly, I am astonished at your levity, and begin to fear you have given great cause for Colonel Briggs' evil report of you," said Althea, gravely.

"I hope, my lady, you are not going to believe any harm of me from what he has said, nor till you have heard my story. I did not tell you about this last night, you were so full of grief, neither was I sure it concerned you till this morning, when a pedlar came to the hostelry with a basket of hardwares, such as starched bands, gloves, combs, wash-balls, and scent-bottles. I was very dull with the rain, so I went to look at them, and bought a

pair of black gloves, and when I opened them to fit them on I found this little slip of paper, requesting me to step into the ashen grove to speak with him."

Althea took the paper. It only contained these words: "Millicent Hill, if you love your lady meet me in the ashen grove, near the churchyard, at noon; I have something of great importance to say.—R. P."

"Well, my lady, you were writing letters and I thought it best not to disturb you, so I put on my cloak and hood and tripped off to hear what it was the major had to say, as I found it concerned you."

"What was it?" asked Althea, eagerly.

"It was to inquire whether you were going to Calgarth Hall, of your own free will, with Colonel Briggs, my lady? for if it was by constraint, he would engage to take you from him and conduct you back to Chester," replied Milly.

"What was your reply?" asked Althea.

“Marry!” said I, “it is sorely against all our wills, and we shall all be greatly beholden to any brave cavalier who will deliver us from that odious roundhead colonel. ‘Say you so?’ cried Major Philipson; ‘then I’m the man will do the deed. Be so good as to give this letter to your lady, and buy a white breast-knot with this golden carolus to wear at our bridal.’”

“Oh, fie, Milly; how could you do such a thing?” exclaimed Althea.

“Nay, my lady, I am not so much to blame, for I would not take the gold, and have brought you the major’s pretty note, but I had scarcely hidden it in my bosom, and bidden the major good-day, and before he was out of sight, Colonel Briggs came stalking into the grove with Bethuliel, Samuel Stunner, the coachman calling himself “Antipope” for scoff, and half a dozen other pagans after him, like so many bulls of Basan. Colonel Briggs called me a Midianitish

damsel, and many other uncivil names, and asked me how I durst be so bold as to be there talking with a malignant, and that he had a great mind to order his men to hang me on one of the trees.”

“Poor Milly! were you not frightened?”

“Not a bit of it, my lady. I told him there were those within hearing who would come and throw him and all his ill-favoured carles into the Wyre, if so be I raised a kirl for help.”

“But did you mention Major Philipson’s name, Milly?”

“No; I thought it better not, as the major was not showing openly; but he guessed it could be no one else. Quoth he, ‘It is Robin the Devil you have been talking with, and I will not suffer you to be another hour in the service of that honourable young lady, Mistress Althea Woodville.’ ‘That does not rest with you, for you are neither her master nor mine, and I defy you,’ said I. ‘Then he

told me 'he had the power as your guardian to discharge me and all your servants,' my lady, and he has done it too ; but when we came in, for he held me fast by the arm till he got me into the dining-room, he opened your lady mother's desk, and took out her household book, summed up my wages, gave me ten broad pieces, and handed me a paper to sign, but I tore the paper and stamped on it, and pitched the broad pieces at his head."

"Oh, Milly, Milly ! foolish girl, you have furnished him with an excuse for depriving me of the comfort of your faithful services by giving way to such unfeminine violence," said Althea, shaking her head.

"It is enough to make any woman violent when her arm has been pinched black and blue," replied Milly, stripping up her sleeve and displaying the livid indentation of three fingers and a thumb above her elbow.

"It is very aggravating, doubtless, to be so ungently handled," observed Althea, cast-

ing a look of commiseration on the injured arm; “but I fear we of the weaker sex have small chance of avenging personal outrages by reciprocating them.”

“At any rate, my lady, the ruffian cannot prevent you from reading Major Philipson’s letter. I would have borne a few more pinches to bring that safe to hand,” said Milly, drawing the billet from her bosom, and presenting it to her lady.

Althea blushed deeply, and taking a miniature pair of scissors from the gold chatelaine that depended from her girdle severed the floss silk from the seal, and unfolding the letter, read as follows:

“COUSIN ALTHEA,

“Albeit the kindred between us is scarcely within the forbidden degrees, it emboldens me to address these poor lines to you in your orphan loneliness, to offer, in the event of your requiring aid, a kins-

man's service. I was near you yesterday, though you were unconscious of my vicinity. Hearing you are going to Calgarth Hall with Bat Briggs, I would be so bold as to inquire of your sweet self, is it with your own free will? If not, I shall be only too happy to achieve your rescue on receiving the slightest intimation that you would like to be escorted to Chester, to Lancefield Court, or to any other place you may prefer.

“If you have no opportunity of sending me either a letter or verbal message, I will endeavour to meet you before you cross the Lancaster sands, and ascertain your pleasure.

“In the meantime I kiss your fair hands, and am,

“Madam,

“Your faithful servant to command,

“And humble kinsman,

“ROBERT PHILIPSON.”

“What will you do, madam?” asked Milly.

“Alas!” replied Althea, mournfully, “I have no choice; I must fulfil my mother’s dying injunctions, and allow myself to be placed under the protection of my puritan kinswoman, the sister of Colonel Briggs; distasteful as the domesticity with persons of their way of thinking, cannot fail of being to me, I must submit to it for a while. A year and a half will soon pass away, and then I shall be of age and my own mistress.”

“More probably forced to become the wife of Colonel Briggs,” observed Milly.

Althea turned pale and shuddered, but quickly recovering her wonted elasticity of spirit, she said: “No fear of that, he dislikes me as much as I do him. It was hatred at first sight between us both, and he is not far short of fifty years old.”

“Ay, madam! but you are young and

fair, an heiress withal, and will be wholly in his power by yon lone lake. Dearest lady, think twice before you slight Major Philipson's offer. Time flies, and it will be necessary to answer his letter."

"I know not how to send my answer, if I do write," observed Althea, rising and pacing the room in great perturbation.

Milly placed writing materials on a table, whispering, as she did so, "I shall, no doubt, find means of putting him in possession of your letter, madam, if you will only write it."

Althea found it a difficult task; at last, after spoiling various sheets of paper, she wrote :

"It may not be, brave Major Philipson; my reputation would be for ever compromised if I sanctioned what you propose. My lamented mother has made Colonel Briggs my guardian, and has enjoined me to proceed with him to Calgarth Hall, to reside there

under the protection of his sister. How reluctantly I conform myself to her commands I will not say, but it is my duty, and I have no choice. Farewell!

“Thanks for the friendly interest you take in the fate of your sorrowful kinswoman,

“ALTHEA WOODVILLE.”

CHAPTER XV.

SIX and thirty hours of down-pouring rain had been succeeded by a glittering afternoon, but the sun was setting wan and hazy over Morecambe Bay.

“Tide serves ; boh there winna be ony crassing o’er sands t’ night, observed Matt Carter, of Silverdale, one of the sturdy Lancashire peasants, whose vocation it was to act as guide to travellers requiring to perform that somewhat perilous journey.

The guide was, indeed, bound to be waiting on horseback on the bank of the river Kent, to point out the spot where it was fordable, and to ride before the travellers who were

about to cross sands, with a long pole in his hand, shod with iron, to try if the sands were firm for man, beast, and wheeled carriages ; but so persuaded was Matt, that nothing but wild-geese and seagulls would venture to pass “o'er sands” on so unpromising an evening, that instead of mounting his iron-grey nag, and riding off to his post, he stood loitering before the porch of the Feathers, the ancient hostlery at Hest, or more properly speaking, *Haste* bank in the picturesque hamlet of Slyne, near Lancaster. Since the chapel and hospitium, formerly established there by the prior of Cartmel, for the benefit of travellers, had been swept away, this was the place where man and beast usually halted for refreshments previous to commencing their journey.

Matt of Silverdale was enjoying a chat with Wat Sorby, who had formerly been his coadjutor in the office of sands' guide, but had ever since the commencement of the civil war

engaged in the royal cause as a follower of Major Philipson, whose tenant his father was. Presently they were joined by Jonas Brayd, the landlord of the Feathers, who entreated them “to come in and take a horn of warm flip; not,” said he, “that I need to stand at my own door calling for custom like lantlort o’ ‘Poo’ton Piper;’ na, na. I ha’ customers enoo’ to meh tap, for as mony as li’le Betty can serve.”

“ Ha’ eye not got Rufflring Robin, o’ the Holme, an’ some o’ his merry lads wi’ ye t’-night, lantlort?” asked Matt.

“ Ay, ay, or ye’d not ha’ seen Wat Sorby here,” replied Brayd.

“ By my troth, I think not,” said Sorby; “ but Major Philipson’s the leader men love to follow, with his free heart, open hand, and pleasant speech.”

“ I swear unto thee, Wat o’ Rutchot’s, that were it not for my duty to customers, I would mount to-morrow and turn cavalier myself,

only for t' pleasure of following him," cried Brayd."

"Ho, ho, ho! I can but fancy thee i' t' saddle, lantlort, among Major Philipson's stop-for-nought riders on a moonlight scamper across moss, and moor, and fell," shouted Sorby, clapping the portly publican on the shoulder. "Thou'd better stay at whoam end take heed that t' Feathers be'ant cropped by some roundhead rascot who may list to bring his troop o' canting attercraps, t' free quarters i' t' hostlery, drink aw t' flaggons dry, pocket spoons, and p'raps carry off li'le Betty behind him by way o' baggage."

"Oh, may t' hobhurst seize t' like o' sic tykes, or hag ride un both day and night," roared Brayd, striking Matt of Silverdale's staff on the stone horse-trough. "Ey'd fain raddle t' boanes o' aw sic rascots."

"Dunna fratch till thou'rt hurt, Measter Brayd, cried Matt, "an' thou mak' aw this

brabblement thou'n scare away a good company what are pointing t' noses this gate."

"Good lorjus, it be coach-and-six, with eight armed riders ! Foine times for t' Feathers when gentles travil sic gates," cried Brayd, rubbing his hands.

"Don't boast too soon, landlord," said Wat Sorby. "It's a travelling conventicle, attended by half a score o' preachers. How t' formal carrons square out t' elbows, and eye t' toes as they ride. We shan ha' rare fun as soon as Ruffling Robin comes forth to raddle them."

"Haud thy brabble, Walter!" cried the publican. "I would'na for fifty broad pieces ha' a foight here, for if t' roundheads gets t' day, they'll pill and burn mey hostel ; and then li'le Betty, instead of being fit mate for ony statesman, will be fain to seek her bread as a waiting wench."

He paused, for the group they had been reconnoitring now approached, and the

coachman, with something like an effort to show off the importance of his master's equipage, piloted the heavy, sad, brown coach, which was drawn by six black horses, and surmounted by an overtopping quantity of luggage, into the court-yard of the Feathers, at that time a large inn, where travellers from the south, who commonly regarded crossing the Lancaster sands as a perilous adventure, often tarried for clear weather and favourable hours for attempting that exploit.

“ Will your honours be pleased to lack a dainty supper, and good, well-aired beds?” inquired Brayd, bustling up to the coach door, and addressing the travellers—a lady and gentleman—whose dress and appearance bespoke them members of the rival parties into which England was divided at that unhappy era. They were, indeed, no other than Colonel Briggs and Althea Woodville. He had compelled his reluctant ward to quit Garstang with him that afternoon, and with-

out the solace of the faithful Milly's attendance, for when the damsel, having equipped herself for the journey without paying the slightest regard to his interdict, was resolutely following her lady, he circumvented her by springing in himself as soon as he had handed Althea into the coach, and shouted to Bethuel: "Shut the door, and order the coachman to start for Lancaster," which was done with all the speed six horses could exert, leaving poor Milly standing in the inn-yard alone and disconsolate.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN reply to Brayd's importunate recommendation of the accommodations at the Feathers, Colonel Briggs said :

“ I cannot lose time on a long journey by vain delays. I must cross sands while time and tide serve.”

“ Your honour canna cross sands wi' jaded cattle,” objected mine host. “ T' horses be aw in white foom, neaw hooly spent.”

“ They have only come from Garstang,” said Briggs.

“ Ay, boh wi' foul roads,” observed the ostler. “ Poo fellers, how they hong t' heads.”

“ Verily, colonel, they must have rest and

a good bait," said Abraham Barker, the coachman, who, on account of his zeal against Romanism, had acquired the *sobriquet* of Antipope, an appellation in which he took no small pride.

"Winna ye bide aw neet at t' Feathers, and put off crossing sands till t' morning?" asked a smart little brunette, in a short crimson woollen petticoat, black bodice, snowy kerchief, coif, and apron, who now approached the coach with rather a coquettish air, jingling a bunch of bright keys, which depended from her girdle—symbols of her authority in the Feathers, for she was the only daughter of the house, familiarly styled by its frequenters, pretty li'le Betty. Dropping a reverential and not ungraceful curtsy, she addressed herself to Althea in a sympathizing tone, observing, "that it was moizlin' o' rain, and her ladyship looked cold, waifu', and weary, and had best come forth frae coach and step within gates, where bright fires were

swithering, and hot spiced wine and buttered cakes and crackers aw ready.”

“Thanks, kind maiden, for your courtesy,” said Althea, alighting from the coach. “I would gladly follow you, were I free to use my own pleasure.”

“Sure, my lady, your worshipful father or uncle, or whatsoever he be, will be blithe to lead thee whatever gate thee ma’st wish to gae.”

“Here, you publican,” cried Briggs, whose wrath was excited by li’le Betty’s provoking mistake of the relation in which he stood to his fair young fellow-traveller, attributing it to a wilful piece of impertinence. “Take that prating damsels hence, and send thy wife to show the lady into the house, while the horses are taken out and baited.”

“My wife, your honour, is no longer at your service or mine,” replied Brayd, seeing she’s been dead three years last Candlemas. May our blessed Lady and all the saints obtain rest for her soul.”

“ Avaunt, son of the vile woman in scarlet!” exclaimed Briggs; “offendest thou mine ears by impious prayers for the dead? Thou art, I perceive, a rank papistical dog.”

“ Papistical dog!” exclaimed mine host, firing at this uncivil attack on his creed and person, and at the same time calling to mind the vicinity of Major Philipson and his party. “Thou savourest of far worse things than papacy, which is, thanks to our blessed Lady, the faith of mony a better mon in Lonkyshiar than thee beest.”

“ Bethuliel,” cried Briggs, “tie the idolatrous porpoise neck and heels together, and cast him into yonder pond.”

“ Thanks for thy intended favour, colonel,” replied Brayd, retreating behind Wat Sorby and Matt of Silverdale,” but I have those within hail who will soon put thee and thy cradinely tykes to the scamper an thou touch a hair o’ my head.”

As he spoke, a burst of manly voices from

within sang in jovial chorus one of the popular ditties of the loyal party.

SONG OF THE NORTHERN CAVALIERS.

Mount for the king, gallant Cheshire and Lancashire,
Sons of proud Westmoreland boldly stand forth,
Cumberland catches already the loyal fire,
And the cause of the crown shall prevail in the north.

Banners are waving from Morecambe to Windermere,
Kirkstone re-echoes the bugle's bold swell,
Broadswords and high plumes of many a brave cavalier
Glance to the sunbeam on lowland and fell.

Come to the muster, ye men of the valley ;
Hasten ye lads of the mountain and lake,
Ambleside, Bowness, and Ulverston rally,
Hawkshead and Broughton and Kendal awake.

Mount for the king, and let glory inspire you,
Dalesmen and statesmen assemble your might,
Nobles and gentles let loyalty fire you,
To rise for the crown and make ready for fight.

“ Woe is me that I have stumbled on the very camp of the Philistines,” exclaimed Briggs. “ Bethuliel, bid the coachman and postillions yoke the horses to the coach with all speed.”

The postillions grumbled and expostulated that from Garstang to Hest Bank was a double

stage, and though a fresh pair had been put on at Lancaster, the horses wanted extra rest and good baiting before crossing sands.

“ Bring them each a pail of meal and water,” said Briggs.

“ Papistical dog hanna six pails in his kennel, and not one for pestilent puritans what rail on holy kirk,” observed Brayd, from the porch.

“ The horses shall go without, then,” cried Briggs; “ there are six of them; it is but eleven miles to Hest Bank, it will be a moon-light crossing, and no danger if the guide is at his post.”

“ Na, na! guide is this gate,” observed the ostler.

“ So much the better,” said Briggs.
“ Where is he?”

No answer.

“ I would give a broad piece for a sight of his face to-night,” continued Briggs, impatiently.

“ That be a bonny carolus easily earned,

an' thou be a mon o' thy word," cried Matt of Silverdale, advancing from the porch, and holding out his hand.

"How now, you saucy fellow; what is that for?" asked Briggs.

"For t' gold, measter, thou wert pleased to offer for glint o' t' guide's feace t' neet, for ey'm t' mon."

"Well, there's the money, and now mount and do your duty," cried Briggs, flinging down the gold.

"Thou'll na catch Matt o' Sillerdale guid-ing so mony folk to t' dule," cried Matt, pocketing the reward, and regaining the porch with a backward spring, whence he retreated into the inn. He was received with a shout of gratulation by the cavaliers.

"The Philistine hath escaped into the camp of the enemy," drawled Bethuliel.

"Verily, I will undertake to lead ye safely across the sands myself," said Colonel Briggs. "I have traversed them too often,

from my boyhood upwards, not to know every channel and quicksand ; yea, every big boulder stone between Slyne and Hest Bank, and am as familiar with the track as any godless guide."

" Good luck to your first essay at guiding geese o'er Lancaster Sands, Colonel Crop-head," shouted Wat Sorby. " Thou'st chosen a bonny night for it—an unwilling woman in company, jaded cattle, and the sin of rebellion on t' head, which is enough of itself to sink ye aw into a quicksand."

" Scoundrel ! I will teach you to prate to me," exclaimed Briggs, levelling his pistol at Sorby. Althea shrieked, and pulled his arm aside ; the pistol went off, but the bullet flew wide of the mark.

" I can fire a petronel as well as thou, and with truer aim," said Sorby, drawing a loaded pistol from his belt, and pointing it at Briggs, with a glance that sent a thrill through his frame, like the *avant courier* of death.

“ Hold, Sorby, in the name of the king!” exclaimed a commanding voice, and the arm that had never been known to miss its aim was instantly lowered.

Althea’s heart fluttered, and her pale cheek flushed, for she instantly recognised in the energetic young officer—who, with his party of followers, now issued from the porch of the Feathers—the unforgotten features of Major Philipson. He raised his plumed hat, and bowed low to her, with an air of differential homage.

Althea silently acknowledged his greeting by curtsying in reply, stealing a furtive glance at Colonel Briggs as she did so.

Briggs seized her fiercely by the arm, and placed himself in front of his party, while Bethuliel called loudly on Antipope, who had taken refuge in the coach :

“ Come forth, thou faint heart, and help us do battle with the Philistines.”

“ Now, shame upon you, cousin Bat, for

your cowardly subterfuge in holding so fair a shield before you," exclaimed Philipson. " You well know that we cavaliers would rather forego a victory than imperil a lady."

Althea endeavoured to extricate her arm from the herculean grasp of Briggs, but in vain.

" Content thee, foolish maiden," cried he ; " I am doing the duty of a faithful guardian by striving to protect thee from the godless malignants and their evil-minded leader."

" I will hold off the attack till the lady is safely in the house ; and then, cousin Bat, we will fight it out like neighbours and relations," said Philipson.

" A very neighbourly proposal, forsooth," returned Briggs ; " but know, most roystering and deboshed malignant, that it doth not suit me to fight where the odds are against me."

" How the plague do you make that out ?" asked Philipson.

" Verily, there are twelve vessels of wrath

under thy command, besides this evil publican and his household of sinners."

"Hollo there, mine host of the Feathers, dost hear? This roundhead has done what I never could—made thee a cavalier! Wilt help me at a pinch by popping off a petronel or pushing a pike?" cried Philipson.

"I'll keep out o' brabblements while I can major, and leave foighting to men o' war. I'll just step into t' house to take care o' li'le Betty and t' taps."

"You see, cousin Bat, that mine host of the Feathers is a neutral, and therefore you may safely bestow our fair kinswoman in his hostel under the care of his daughter, that she may be safe, and out of the way of the pikes and bullets, while we fight it out," said Philipson, "and let the victor win her," he added, with a merry glance at Althea.

"If you have any respect for the presence of a helpless, fearful woman," exclaimed Althea, "you will refrain from strife. Major

Philipson, I appeal to your feelings as a gentleman, for my sake, to waive the conflict which Colonel Briggs has expressed his wish to decline."

"Your will shall be my law," replied Philipson, sheathing his sword.

"Bethuliel, is your company ready to start?" inquired Colonel Briggs of the quartermaster.

"Yea, master, but they crave after the flesh-pots of Egypt," replied Bethuliel.

"They shall refrain their voraciousness till they reach the Travellers' Rest at Hest Bank. There is no fear with six horses, two of them quite fresh, but we shall cross in safety, and then double allowance shall be dealt to man and beast," said Briggs. "Cousin Althea, let me put you into the coach, or we shall have the tide up before we are over the sands."

"Surely, cousin Bat, you are not going to involve this lady in the peril of crossing sands to-night?" exclaimed Philipson.

“She is my ward, and I will not brook any interference between us,” replied Briggs. “Where I consider it safe to venture my person, she need not fear any danger; and I intend to sleep at Hest Bank to-night.”

“Her fair form will be wrapped in a billowy shroud before midnight, if you persist in your rash purpose,” said Philipson, gazing with almost tearful earnestness on Althea.

“Mind thine own business, Robert Philipson, and trouble not thyself with mine,” replied Briggs. “I have crossed these sands at all hours and in all weathers. I know them as familiarly as yon skulking villain the guide (who ought to have been at his post), and I will adventure to lead my party over to-night without his aid.”

“By heavens! she shall not be of your party if you do,” exclaimed Philipson.

“Shall she not?” cried Briggs, speaking through his shut teeth.

“No, not if I have to tear her from

you at sword's point," retorted Philipson, fiercely.

"Major Philipson, remember your promise to keep the peace," interposed Althea.

"You know not the peril into which that man who calls himself your guardian will involve you if you trust yourself with him. I cannot, and what is more I will not, allow you to cross the sands, as he proposes, without a guide," said Philipson.

"Cousin Althea, are you minded to stay here all night with this godless profligate?" asked Colonel Briggs, impatiently.

"Harkye, Bartholomew Briggs," cried Philipson, "I will resign my quarters at the Feathers to you, and clean vacate the house with my party, provided you will give up this mad project of crossing sands to-night, and dragging fair Mistress Woodville into such needless peril. Only let her rest quietly where she is to-night, and I pledge my honour not to cause you let or hindrance."

“When I require quarters, they shall not be of your providing, and when I need counsel I shall not advise with you,” replied Briggs. “Cousin Althea, we are losing the precious time.”

“Brave Major Philipson, farewell,” said Althea. “Thanks for your kindness. May heaven favour your cause, and fortune smile on your crest!”

“Fortunate I needs must be since I carry your good wishes with me, gentle lady,” replied Philipson.

“My soul is weary of these leasing vanities,” interrupted Briggs.

“It is over and past,” sighed Althea, waving her hand in acknowledgment of Philipson’s mute farewell, and sorrowfully resigning herself to the will of her grim guardian.

Briggs having placed her in the coach, bade Bethuliel look to the firearms, and seat himself on the box by Antipope, then mounted his charger, and taking a long pike from one

of the troopers as a substitute for the probing-staff used at that period by the guides, he put himself at the head of the party, and gave the word to advance.

Antipope, with the aid of the two malcontent postilions Hodge and Miles, put the unwilling horses into motion.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUCH of my readers as have achieved the exploit of crossing the Lancaster Sands previously to the completion of that mighty enterprise of modern science, the construction of the Morecambe Bay Railroad, are aware of what the nature of the expedition was in the days of the old Sands' coach. Few among them can forget the thrill of awe and excitement they experienced when for the first time descending from Hest Bank into the wild expanse of plain, whence the tide had so recently retired, and whither at its appointed time it would return again with resistless force, sweeping everything before it.

Woe, then, to the careless traveller who

either miscalculated the proper hour for crossing, or unwittingly deviated from the track. That track was daily mapped out by the experienced guides in a wavy semicircle, but with no more substantial markers than broom or furze-tops, familiarly termed broggs, stuck in the moist sands.

All was new and strange to Althea, and tinged with mysterious gloom, as the coach in which she was a sad and lonely traveller entered the wild expanse of sands, jolted uneasily through the bed of the river Kier, and coasted the shores of Carnforth, now so familiar as the commencement of the Morecambe Bay line to railroad travellers, who, rejoicing in their present security, feel no portion of the trepidation experienced by those who crossed the treacherous sands in the former time.

Althea looked with some alarm at a broad sheet of water which overflowed nearly half a mile of the track, but Colonel Briggs rode up

to the coach window, and told her not to be afraid, for though it had a formidable appearance, it was only what the guides called a “flash,” or shallow spread of water from the overplus of the channel. He and the troopers dashed boldly through it, and the coach slowly but safely followed.

Warton Crag, broad and high, like a battlemented fortress, now rose before her to the right, and appeared to shut her out from the world, while to the left all was lost in misty obscurity. Anon the castled heights of Silverdale Cliffs and the gloomy brow of Arnside Knot threw their dark shadows on her path. A shower of mingled rain and sleet compelled her to close the leathern curtains of the coach, and desist from further observations. Enveloping herself in her black veil and cloak, she threw herself back in the carriage, and abandoned herself to a melancholy retrospect of the events of the last three months.

Her detention at Chester by her mother's

illness, and being in consequence thrown in contact with Major Philipson ; her mother's obstinacy in pursuing the northern journey before she had recovered strength for the undertaking ; their perilous encounter with the Cheshire clubmen, and unexpected deliverance by Philipson ; her mother's fatal relapse at Garstang ; the ill-omened appearance of Briggs at the very moment of her death ; his unsympathizing attempts at consolation ; his odious arrangement of her mother's funeral, and the painful fact that he had become the arbiter of her destiny in consequence of Lady Woodville's well-intended but injudicious testamentary disposition, which doomed her to a weary domestication with him and his sister, nominally till she should attain her majority ; but haply for a life-long term of bondage, for how should she be able to regain her freedom if he chose to detain her and her property in his own hands ? her prospects appeared so dreary that she wept showers of tears during

the first half-hour of her journey towards the unknown home where her youth and beauty were to be hidden, her wit despised, and her accomplishments treated as crimes; she who had during the life of her beloved father known no sorrow but the occasional reverses to which the loyal party were subjected.

The outrageous manner in which her guardian exercised his authority by the dismissal of her faithful old servants, and even depriving her of the attendance of her own maid, filled her with the bitterest indignation. This she had manifested by maintaining a scornful silence from the moment she left Garstang till the encounter between him and Philipson in the courtyard of the Feathers at Hest Bank compelled her to speak.

Now that the excitement of that scene was over, and she had refused Philipson's offer of rescuing her from the power of her uncongenial guardian, a deeper feeling of depression came over her as she felt the utter helpless-

ness of her position, for a sense of duty to the will of her deceased mother, as well as feminine propriety, constrained her to act according to the injunctions of her last surviving parent, who was scarcely cold in her grave.

Mrs. Kezia Briggs was her only female relative, and however opposed in sentiments and dissimilar in manners to herself, she must make up her mind to live peaceably with her. Having come to this determination, she dried her eyes, and strove to compose her agitated spirits.

The moon had now risen, broad and watery, in a cloudy sky, lending a wild melancholy grandeur to the scene, and exaggerating the dark shadows of the gaunt figures of the troopers, who rose on either side the coach into giant-like proportions, especially that of Colonel Briggs, who, pike in hand, rode singly before the cortége, and for a time gave proof by his warnings to Antipope and the postilion that he had not overrated his local knowledge and

powers of observation. The dark shadows of Broadhill were now passed, and the wooded height of Castlehead, when Briggs, exulting in the thought of having performed the task of leading his party so far in safety, thought proper to deliver an extempore sermonet on the analogy between temporal and spiritual guides. Bethuliel being in like manner moved in spirit, instead of listening to his master, began to preach from the coach-box to Antipope and the postilions from the same text, “If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?” while the hindmost trooper, Samuel Stunner, addressing the two footmen, exclaimed in a peculiarly nasal twang, “Let us uplift our voices in the wilderness to sing a comfortable song done into verse by Master Robin Wisdom, from one of king David’s psalms, wherein Pope and Turk are so manfully defied, and then gave out the commencing lines of that popular stave :

“Defend us, Lord, by Thy dear word,
From Pope and Turk defend us, Lord.”

The two footmen behind the coach instantly contributed their voices, and were joined by the other troopers in their lusty dissonance, much to the annoyance of Briggs, who regarded their inattention to his outpouring as a personal disrespect, and their preference of their own vocal performances as a token of their carnal vanity.

A painful apprehension next struck him that he had deviated from the track. This was unfortunately the case, a line of the “brogg” broom-top markers having been washed away, and not replaced. While he was casting about how to repair his oversight, a sound caught his ear which sent a cold thrill of terror through every vein in his body—a low, gurgling sound, which mingled as a fearful accompaniment with the psalmody, and instantly silenced the two postilions, who were both natives of that district.

The next moment the coach, with a violent

jolt, settled down into a bed of mud and water, over which the attendant riders had passed without difficulty, but the heavy vehicle, which contained almost enough timber to build a house, and was besides loaded with luggage, sank deeper and deeper with every effort used by the coachman and horses to extricate it. At this juncture the two postillions simultaneously drew out their knives, and before any one was aware of their intent, each severed the traces of the horse on which he was mounted from the rest of the harness, and galloped off at full speed, shouting, as they did so, to the troopers :

“Roide, roide for your lives — for your lives! — bore is coming in.”

Briggs vociferated to Antipope and Bethuliel his unavailing orders for them to free the coach by lashing the remaining horses forward; but this was vainly attempted by Antipope, while Bethuliel exclaimed in despair :

“Curse ye, curse ye bitterly! the coach,

and Miles and Hodge, the runagate postilions thereof."

But while the imprecation was yet on his lips, the thought occurred of providing for his own safety by following their example. Sliding down from the box, he speedily detached one of the uncoupled leaders, and before Colonel Briggs was aware of his design, mounted and was gone. His flight was the signal for the troopers to put their chargers to the gallop and ride off. A gust of wind from the Cartmel-fells now dispersed the fog, and the moon shone out on the desolate scene. Althea became aware of her peril, and called in terror on Colonel Briggs for aid.

Perceiving that there was no hope of extricating the coach from the channel into which it had sunk, he opened the door and cried:

"Step on the wheel and scramble up behind me on my horse, take a hard grip of my belt, sit firmly, and I will try to save you—if you will promise to become my wife."

“Your wife!” gasped Althea.

“Time is too precious to waste in trifling,” said Briggs. “Answer, yes or no?”

“No!” cried Althea, vehemently. “I would rather die.”

“Stay where you are, then, perverse woman, and sink to the depths of——”

The conclusion of his speech was lost in the burst of passion with which he turned away. Striking his spurs into his charger, he rode off at furious speed. Never had the love of life throbbed so powerfully in Althea’s bosom as at that moment—life, which one short hour previously she had regarded as a weariness and a burden too joyless to be borne. She now made a last effort for her preservation by calling on Antipope and the two footmen, who were busily employed in detaching the three remaining horses from the coach, to save her.

“Our horses will have enough to carry single,” replied Antipope; “every one for themselves.”

“ And God for us all,” rejoined Daniel, the footman, looking back compassionately on Althea as he mounted. “ If I could help you I would; but this mare is a kicker, and you could not keep your seat two minutes, so you are safer where you are, specially if you can climb to the roof of the coach and sit there.”

“ Coach will turn over when t’waters rise,” observed the other.

“ If her time is not yet come, the coach may float like an ark, and then she’ll take no harm,” said Daniel.

“ Farewell, mistress!” cried Antipope, who had now mounted. “ You will have time to pray, and if you heartily repent you of your sinful vanities, grace may abound.”

“ Ay, wrestle in prayer till your lamp be trimmed, and mayhap it may burn brightly before the waters be upon you,” said Daniel, “ and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul, poor maiden.”

“Amen! amen!” sobbed Althea, who, with the sound of their retreating horses’ hoofs, which fell like a knell upon her ear, lost the last spark of hope, and with hope departed the agonizing desire of life which had a few moments previously impelled her to supplicate so piteously for aid the hard, selfish beings who had left her to perish.

“I shall, at any rate, leave no one to weep for me,” she exclaimed, as the increasing roar of the waters warned her that her earthly span was drawing to a close. She leaned back in the coach, enveloped her face in the folds of her cloak, and commended her soul to the mercy of her Saviour and her God. Oh, how fervently!

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALTHEA's earnest preparations for death were suddenly interrupted by the hasty pattering of horses' hoofs and the familiar sounds of human voices. She seemed to awake as from an awful dream; the love of life was rekindled in her youthful bosom by the near approach of the living.

“The saints be praised, we are not too late!” exclaimed two horsemen, dashing up to the sinking coach. “In another moment we should have been,” cried the stoutest of the twain, dismounting and taking Althea in his nervous arms with as much ease as if she had been an infant; he placed her on a pillion

behind his companion, exclaiming, as he did so, "Haud hard and sit firm."

"Yes, cling to me, my life. We must ride a sharp race to-night. If mortal man can save you, I will," said the young cavalier.

"Oh, is it, indeed, you, brave Major Philipson?" whispered Althea, as she stole her small white hand within his belt, and grasped it firmly in compliance with Wat Sorby's exhortations.

"The same, at your service," replied Philipson. "Surely you did not take me for Bat Briggs?"

"Cease talking, Major, and ply your spurs," interposed Sorby. "I crave pardon for tendering advice to my commander, but remember we must ride for life."

"Fear not, when once the lady is well settled on the pillion. It was a bright thought of li'le Betty lending it. I will put Haroun to his speed. Now for it!" The mettled Arabian sprang forward at the touch of the spur with a

bound that would have precipitated Althea from her seat had she not grasped Philipson's belt with an unrelaxing hold. The rapidity with which they cleared the ground almost deprived her of breath, yet she saw with terror that the white-crested waves appeared to gain upon them.

After ten minutes of sharp riding, Philipson slackened his speed to breathe his horse.

“The waters are beating us, Walter,” cried he. “We have passed the track for Hest Bank, I fear.”

“Yes, it is so. Make for Humphrey Head, Major,” said Sorby, whose local knowledge and former experience as a guide now stood his master in good stead. He raised his whip and pointed to the rifted crags of that lofty promontory, gleaming white and bare in the moonlight. “Ha, ha,” continued he, “I see the light from Wraysholme Tower. Courage! We shall do it now. Let me pass and guide you.”

“I protest,” cried Althea, “that my skirts are floating on the waters!”

“Fear not,” said Philipson, “we are safe now.”

Sorby succeeded in gaining the dark narrow tongue of land that jutted out into the advancing tide, and shouted for his master to follow.

Philipson’s horse stumbled and plunged among the shingle and sharp fragments of rock, and Althea with difficulty preserved her seat.

Another desperate effort, and the gallant steed, with his twofold burden, neared the point where Sorby, who had abandoned his own horse, stood on a rocky shelf with extended arms to receive Althea. Philipson, dropping bridle and whip, raised her light form from the pillion and tossed her up to him. The next minute all three were kneeling on *terra firma* and uniting in an impulsive act of thanksgiving to Almighty God for their preservation from a watery grave.

The horses released from their burdens presently reached the shore. Sorby, passing his arms through the loosened bridles of both, led them forward, while Philipson tenderly supported the tottering steps of the wet and weary lady along the rugged path that wound under the dark shadow of the beetling rock.

Too much exhausted and agitated to be able to give coherent utterance to her feelings, it was long ere Althea had power to express in words her gratitude to her brave preserver for the service he and Wat Sorby had rendered her, and her surprise at their unlooked-for arrival in the moment when, abandoned by Colonel Briggs and his party, she had given herself up for lost.

Philipson then told her that, anticipating the danger in which Briggs's attempt at guiding the party over sands would be sure to involve her, he and Wat Sorby had mounted their good steeds as soon as they could be got ready, to follow them for the

chance of rendering their aid in putting them into the right track, if in nothing else, and that li'le Betty had brought her pillion, and strenuously urged him to have it buckled on Haroun's crupper, in case he should find it necessary to take the lady behind him, as all who knew the sands were persuaded that the coach would be stuck fast in one or other of the channels by the unskilful driver; and thus it happened that he was provided with that accommodation.

“Ay, and a bright thought it was of bonny li'le Betty,” exclaimed Sorby, “for it was the saving of the lady’s life. She would never have been able to keep her seat without it.”

“Long life to bonny li'le Betty!” cried Philipson; “I’ll send her back her pillion new-covered with crimson and bordered with gold-lace.”

“And I will send her a handsome green riding-skirt and jacket with silver buttons, for

her kind, womanly care for me," said Althea ; " but how to repay the deep debt of gratitude I owe to you, Major Philipson, and your brave follower here, for so generously risking your lives for the preservation of mine, I know not."

" We are only too happy in our success," returned Philipson, gently pressing the hand that rested on his arm. " As for the risk we encountered, it would have been little for men who dash o'er sands as often as Walter Sorby and I, in the king's service, if that pragmatical fellow, Bat Briggs had not led us such an unreasonable dance by pretending to play the guide and going so far out of the track. No wonder the heavy coach foundered by the way. It was only by observing the point from which the rascals were scampering, that Wat Sorby guessed where they had left it. But did not Bat Briggs make any attempt to extricate you from the frightful peril in which he was the means of involving you ?"

“He offered to take me up behind him on his charger, and do his utmost to bring me safe to land, if I would promise to—to become his wife,” said she.

“The cold, calculating villain! And what was your answer?”

“That I would rather die.”

“Glorious girl!” exclaimed Philipson, pressing her arm passionately to his heart. “And so he took you at your word and left you to perish?”

“Even so,” replied Althea, becoming very faint as the recollection of that dreadful moment came over her.

“My life—my angel!—you are ill,” cried Philipson, passing his arm round her. “Let me support you?”

“Only a passing spasm. I shall be well presently.”

“It is these wet garments,” said Philipson, anxiously. “Sorby, whither can I take her for warmth and shelter?”

“Where but to Wraysholme Tower, Major? It is not five minutes’ walk from hence, and Sir John Harrington will blithely give us all we need.”

Wraysholme Tower, in its ancient strength and grandeur, occupied—and its storm-beaten remains, now degraded into farm-buildings, still occupy—a rising ground in the valley between Humphrey Head and Hest Bank. The flowery lane which now leads to it from the Cartmel coast was once a stately avenue of approach through the park, shaded with spreading ash and hardy sycamore trees.

As Major Philipson, Althea, and Sorby were making for the arched stone gateway which then opened into this avenue, a solitary female of wild and picturesque appearance, clad in a fanciful costume, advanced from beneath the dark shadow of a projection of the jutting rock, and confronted them, holding a light hazel wand in her hand, with

which she gesticulated as if she would oppose their approach to the gateway.

“So, Robert Philipson,” she exclaimed, “you have rode your wild race against the tide, won it, and brought your fair lady to land; but she will not dry her wet garments in Wraysholme Tower to-night.”

“Why not, Merab? Sir John Harrington is true to the cause of the crown, and will show us all hospitality.”

“He needs it himself. He is homeless to-night. Wraysholme Tower is occupied by Colonel Rigby and his troop.”

“Dule take the roundhead villains!” ejaculated Sorby. “We must, then, to Hest Bank, Major.”

“Yes; there is no other choice,” replied Philipson.

“Ye’ll meet old acquaintances at the Traveller’s Rest, muttered Merab, as she plunged into a coppice of trees near the gate, and was presently lost to sight.

“Who is that strange being?” demanded Althea of Philipson.

“Faith, I can scarcely answer to that question,” he replied; “but she has the reputation of being a witch.”

“A witch?” echoed Althea, who was not free from the superstition of the age; “and do you deal with witches, Major Philipson?”

“Not directly,” returned he, merrily, “or I should have borrowed her broomstick to whisk you over sands, sweet Althea, instead of riding my poor Arabian to death, as I much fear I have done. What say you, Wat Sorby?”

“Haroun will never carry you on a moonlight scamper again, master. See how he quakes and shivers.”

“Do you think Merab has bewitched him?” asked Althea, half fearfully.

“No; Merab, if she possesses any power, would use it in my behalf,” said Philipson. “You must know, I once saved her mother

from being burned at the stake by a puritanical justice of the peace at Flookborough, and Merab has patronized me ever since."

"You are old acquaintances, then?"

"Yes; this was five years ago. I was out with the hounds, and the chase fortunately led this way, and I came up just in the nick of time to save the poor old girl by dashing in, cutting her bonds with my whittle, and driving all the constables to the right-about, and keeping Justice Assthwaite in talk while she toddled away with Merab in a whole skin. How now, my darling? You are ill!" exclaimed he, for Althea's hand relaxed its hold on his arm, and, exhausted by fatigue, she would have sunk to the ground had he not promptly sustained her. "We must step on as quickly as we can to the Traveller's Rest, Sorby, and see what Bridget can do for this drooping lily," cried Philipson, taking Althea up in his arms, and tenderly supporting her head on his shoulder.

“Her wet clothes have chilled her, notwithstanding our sharp, scrambling walk from Humphrey’s Head; but never fear, a warm bed and a cup of Bridget’s hot spiced ale will set her to rights,” replied Sorby, gazing compassionately on Althea’s fair, pale face, now looking paler in the moonlight as she rested with closed eyes on Philipson’s shoulder, while her ebon tresses and black feathers were streaming with wet. “ ’Tis a delicate toy,” continued he, “for such as admire ebony and alabaster, but give me a little of the bonny, bright red, like li’le Betty’s cheek; that is the lass for me. I should as soon think of falling in love with the white marble lady in Cartmel Priory Church as with this dainty bird.”

CHAPTER XIX.

A BRIGHT fire of peat and logs was blazing on the hearth when Philipson burst into the kitchen of the Traveller's Rest at Hest Bank, with Althea Woodville in his arms.

“Good lorjus, Major Philipson!” exclaimed old Bridget Dodson, the landlady, turning hastily about, “hast thou brought us in a drownded lady?”

“I hope not,” said Philipson, sturdily pushing his way through a wet and shivering group that impeded his approach to the fire. “Here, you untaught varlet, place for the lady,” cried he, seizing Samuel Stunner by the collar with the hand that was at liberty, and expelling him from the cushioned settle

in the chimney-corner, where he was reposing himself after his perilous escape.

“I don’t see why I should turn out of my comfortable place for her,” growled Stunner, casting a malign askance at Althea, who, reviving with the genial warmth of the room, unclosed her large, dark eyes, and gazed wildly round her.

Philipson, who had gently deposited his fair burden on the settle, now snatched the spiced flagon of claret from the hand of one of the wet troopers, who was in the act of conveying it to his mouth, and holding it to Althea’s lips, compelled her to swallow a portion of the warm, comfortable potion, he then untied her riding-hat, relieved her from its weight, and swung it round at arm’s-length to shake the wet from its dripping plumes, regardless of the displeasure of those in whose faces he scattered the spray.

“Come, mother Bridget,” he cried, impatiently, “leave cooking, and hasten to pre-

pare a warm bed and dry linen for this lady with all the speed you may. Quick, quick! I say, old girl, bestir yourself; there is nothing in the world of such importance."

"How do you know that, measter Consequence?" grumbled a querulous voice from the opposite chimney-corner. "I am a lieutenant in the service of the Parliament, and don't choose to have my supper backwarded by your taking the liberty of calling off the person I ordered to cook it more than an hour agone. 'Mistress Bridget,' quoth I, 'cook me some veal collops for my supper; then, just as the meat is ready, in bounces a pair of beggarly postilions. 'Brandy for t' love of t' good cause,' cry they. 'We coom fra' o'er sonds, rid for loife, and left t' coach-and-six and hawf an army drownding, for tide's becoomin' a bore.' 'Good lorjus!' squeaks she, 'they'll surely aw be drownded. Sit ye down, neighbours, by t' fire, and dry wet duds, and I'll fetch t'

brandy.' Then down go my collops, while Hodge and Miles tell their cock-and-bull story, half of which I, of course, set down for lies. At last my collops are put into the pan, and just as they begin to simmer, in burst four rascally troopers as wet as water-rats, only, mind you, not all together, and have done with them. No, sirs; they come in by ha'porths and fardenworths at a time, and off go my collops, and away stumps old Bridget, fussing after spiced ale, and my ears are pestered about the lady that they say 'their master, Colonel Briggs, left in the coach sticking fast in the sands.' I suppose this is the lady of whom they spake. Well, sir, I was sick of hearing about her before I saw her, and now I had rather she was sticking fast in sands still than have had my supper put off again by your sending old Bridget off to prepare a chamber for her, and heard all the rout you have made about her. Pray, sir, who is she? and what is your name?"

“I am Major Philipson, of Holme Island, vulgarly called by your party ‘Robin the Devil,’ ” replied Philipson, “and I must inform you that I feel very much disposed to kick you out of the house for your impertinence, master Coniah Croker.”

“Ho, sir, then you know who I am,” rejoined Croker, and was about to commence another harangue, when the door of an inner apartment opened, and Colonel Briggs entered, followed by Bethuliel.

The appearance of a spectre could not have startled him more than the sight of Althea, who had risen from her seat, and stood on the warm hearth, drying her soaked garments, and wringing the wet out of her long, black hair, which, when Philipson removed her riding-hat, had fallen about her shoulders in disordered luxuriance.

“From whence art thou?” asked Briggs, in a hoarse, sepulchral tone, quavering with agitation.

“From the waters in which you left me to be engulfed, most kind kinsman and trusty guardian!” replied Althea.

“Nay, cousin Althea, blame not me for your own perversity, since I well-nigh lost my life by tarrying to reason with you,” said Briggs; “indeed, I should have been utterly drowned, but that——”

“The fatality commemorated in proverb lore saved thy life, cousin Bat. Why, man, thou mightest go to sea in a leaky sieve, and ne’er drown,” interposed Philipson, laughing.

“Thou here, deboshed malignant!” retorted Briggs. “What bringeth the like of thee into my quarters? Did I not leave thee at the Hest Bank House, which the publican sinner, Jonas Brayd, hath named, after thy cognizance, ‘The Feathers?’”

“It is only proper that I should acquaint you with the fact, Colonel Briggs, of which you appear ignorant,” said Althea, “that I am indebted to the gallantry of Major Philip-

son for the preservation of my life. It was he who, at the peril of his own, took me from the coach where you left me to perish."

"Well, he was predestinate to the work," observed Briggs, coolly; "and now, cousin Althea, you have told your story, I must insist on your retiring to bed. This is really no place for you, and you will get cold by remaining in your wet clothes."

"You are careful of me now, sir," rejoined Althea, scornfully, "but wet garments are mere trifles in comparison with the chance of sleeping among the wild waters of Morecambe Bay, which, but for the generous daring of brave Major Philipson, I must have done this night."

She then retired with Bridget, who came with a lamp in her hand to conduct her to the neat little chamber which had been made ready for her.

"I canna think," said the old woman, indignantly, "how Measter Briggs, of Calgarth

Hall, that's ould enough to ken so much better gates, should ha' na mair wit than stand fratching to let and hinder thee from doffing thy wet gear, my pearl. Douse haud him. An' mey Jock o' Gibbie had wooed me after sic a fashion, a' might a' gone a suitering elsewhere. My Jock was a wabster, dear, and right blithe was I when I had spun hanks enow to plenish t' house before we wedded. He wove thread that I spun ; and though it be none of the finest, if your ladyship will be pleased to count t' threads of t' woof, which thee beest right welcome to do, thee wilt not find a truer piece of work out of a thousand yards frae Holland. They were bonnie days when I wedded my good Jock ; boh if I was a lady, and sic a dainty bairn as thee beest, sweet mistress, I'd ne'er look at sic a carl as Bat o' Calgarth, but young master Robin o' Holme should be t' lad."

“ My good dame,” interrupted Althea,

“being very weary, I will, with many thanks for your kind attendance and other good offices, bid you farewell for the night.”

Bridget, though rather malcontent at her dismissal just as she had introduced a topic on which she felt much disposed to dilate, was too much impressed by the dignity of the young lady’s manner to offer aught but passive obedience to her will.

Althea, as soon as she found herself alone, hastened to pour forth her soul in grateful thanks to the merciful God who had preserved her through such frightful perils as she had that night encountered. She then, placing her lamp in safety, retired to her humble pillow, but not to quiet repose. Her imagination was too busy with the agitating events of the past day, and the terrors of the preceding part of the present night, to admit of peaceful rest; and when weary nature at length yielded to disturbed slumber, she felt as though she were still struggling with the

roaring waters, and awoke with a frightful start, as if on the point of being engulfed amidst the angry waves.

Then a tumultuous confusion of voices seemed to invade the ear in the varied but mingled dissonance of tuneless psalmody, quarrelling, and expostulation. This she in a few moments was convinced was no delusion of dreaming fancy, but that the sounds certainly proceeded from the room below. Unwilling as she was to raise her aching head from the pillow, she sat up in bed, and pressing both her hands on her burning temples to still their painful throbbing, she listened intently, in order to catch the purport of the dispute. She occasionally heard the rival names of King and Parliament, Church and Cause, fiercely bandied. Presently she plainly heard her own name occur frequently in the dispute, and that repeated in loud and angry tones. From this she gathered that she was unfortunately the principal subject of

contest between Briggs and Philipson, and she dreaded lest blood should be shed on her account. A more truly distressing case than hers could scarcely be imagined—feeling the approach of illness in a mean house of public resort without a friend of her own sex, the comfort of a female attendant, or even a change of array.

A thousand times she felt tempted to exclaim against her mother for having thrown her into the power of Colonel Briggs; but she checked herself in these reflections, remembering that Lady Woodville was almost a stranger to her nephew's private character, and that, as her nearest relation, she doubtless acted as she thought for the best in committing the care of her daughter's person and property to him, as in such a time of public confusion it was absolutely necessary that a young and beautiful female, heiress to such large possessions, should not be left without some ostensible protector.

"Oh, that her choice had fallen on any other man," sighed Althea, in the bitterness of her regret. "My father, my dear father, could you see your child, your darling Althea, thus. Ah! had you lived, I should have needed no other protector," continued she, bursting into an agony of tears.

In the miserable predicament in which she found herself placed, she saw only the alternative of putting herself still more in the power of Briggs, by proceeding with him to Calgarth Hall, or accepting the protection of Philipson. The impropriety of this latter measure appeared to her so glaring, that cost what it would to her feelings, she determined to pursue her journey with Briggs, in obedience to the dying commands of her mother.

The tumult below now increased to louder clamours. Her name was again and again repeated in louder tones. Presently she plainly distinguished the clash of arms, and the shrill accents of old Bridget and her

attendant damsel, partly in terror and partly in supplication; but while all this reached her from below, and her anxiety to hear plainly the subject of dispute became more intense, and caused her to hold her breath, lest her respiration should prevent her facility of listening, the harsh, angry voices sank to faint whispers on her ear, and she fell back upon her pillow in a state of utter insensibility.

CHAPTER XX.

As soon as Althea had quitted the lower apartment, Colonel Briggs issued a peremptory order for Philipson to leave the Traveller's Rest. Philipson, in terms full as positive, refused to comply; and on Briggs telling Bethuliel and the other troopers to expel him *vi et armis*, Philipson sprang on a table, and setting his back against the wall, drew a pistol from his belt, and levelling it at Briggs, exclaimed :

“ I told you before I meant to remain here as long as it suited my own pleasure, and the moment any of your ruffians advance a step to lay hands on me, that instant, my

loving cousin Bat, I send a brace of bullets through your brain-pan."

At this intimation, Bethuliel and his assailants paused in mid career. The seasonable entrance of Wat Sorby, accompanied by four stout countrymen, armed with clubs, placed the belligerent powers on a more equal footing.

"Ah! my dear master, 'tis Sorby to the rescue, I see," exclaimed he, on perceiving Philipson's defensive attitude.

"Ay, ay, Walter," cried Philipson, leaping down among the newly-arrived aids. "And," continued he, "never in time of greater need, Sorby. If the puritans had but known, as I remembered when it was too late, that the lock of my petronel was full of salt water, they had o'ermastered me outright, spite of my bold bearing."

"Well, cousin Bat," said he, aloud, "Is't to be peace or war between us? I think an armistice had best be proclaimed on both

sides. Not that I should at all hesitate to engage your men in buff coats with Sorby and his bold recruits. They are lads of mettle, I can assure you, and have served me at a pinch more than once ere now."

The tired troopers growled out that they saw no necessity for fighting where nothing was to be gained, when the time might be much more profitably employed in eating and drinking after their dangers and fatigues.

Briggs sullenly acquiesced in the armistice, and the hostile parties proceeded to arrange themselves quietly on the opposite sides of the hearth; Bridget and her maid placing themselves at the oaken table which stood between the rival powers as neutrals and mediators.

In this latter capacity, old Bridget suddenly recollecting a choice fund of amusement she had in store for her guests exclaimed :

"I'd well nigh forgot that Tummus o'

Dicks, frae post-house, has brought two o' t' diurnals, running o'er with t' latest Lunnon news. So there be one for thee, Master Philipson, that thee may'st see how king and church prosper, and 'tother shall serve to show thee, Master Briggs, t' condition o' t' parliamenters, and both will serve to keep ye quiet while I fry enow o' veal collops to serve more suppers than Master Croker's. And, though I say it, supper is a mortal good thing to stop a brabblement; a'most as good as the freshest news-letter from Lunnon——”

“Woman,” exclaimed Briggs, flinging in great wrath the *quietus* presented to him by the mediatrix to the other end of the room, as soon as he had glanced at it, “Dost mean to insult me by thrusting into my hands one of the filthy fulminations of that godless deviser of deceits, Sir John Birkenhead, from whose pen a lying spirit goeth daily forth to deceive the land?”

“Good lorjus, colonel, what now?” quoth Bridget, with a face of great consternation, being the more alarmed because she did not exactly comprehend the cause of offence, as the name of the witty author of the loyal weekly journal, entitled “Mercurius Aulicus,” was as little known to her as that of the secretary of state to Tamerlane the Great.

Briggs made no answer to this adjuration, but continued to point to the offensive paper with many indications of abhorrence.

“What, Master Briggs, isn’t it a new Mercury? Mercy o’ me, Tummus o’ Dicks said it had only been read by Justice Rawlinson, Parson Fleming, Lawyer Dodgson, and a few other statesmen,* so I paid him a tester for the brace o’ news-letters, out o’ which he was to ask his feyther Dickon for a bawbee, for trouble o’ bringing t’em t’ way.

* Statesmen in the north-west of England are not numbered with the government or legislature of a country, they are merely the possessors of estates.

“More than they were worth by fivepence three farthings, Mistress Bridget. No wonder thou’rt a poor woman, when thou flingest away siller arter sic trash,” observed Lieutenant Croker.

“Na’, na’, neighbour Croker, thou shouldsn’t chide me for doing my best to please my guests. Have I not all sorts of comers and goers, and moughtn’ I do my best to pleas’n all?”

“That is what you don’t do, or you would have given me my collops long agone, you silly old daffock. But regardless that I, who ought to be your most honoured guest, am fasting, you budge this gate to a cavalier, and hobble to that, to curry favour with a roundhead, like an old fool carrion as you be; while I, who have been boarding to your profit at the Traveller’s Rest for this month, am left to bite my fingers, and whistle for a supper. It would pleasure my soul, I vow to heaven, to see all the gear bundled out

of your homestead and sold by public outcry, and yourself trundled off to Lancaster Gaol, at the suit of your brewer."

Such a train of evils evoked upon herself and household gods could not be considered without extreme wrath even by the meek Bridget.

"Out upon thee, thou fause cankered scran-nil, for thy spitefu' words. I owe the brewer nawt, seeing that I brew mine own drink; and as to the mawt merchant, I owe him naw't that I haven't the siller to cover; and that's more than can be said for thee, who hast turned roundhead to cheat thy creditors out o' their lawfu' dues. Ken I not the shop where thou sold vile grocers' stuff at proud Preston? and where thoud'st been bankreaut this Eastern hadn't thou hopped the twig, and turn't sodger for the Commons, that thou might'st stalk debt-free in belted buff. Talk of I bein' trundled off to Lancaster, i' facks! I marvel how many fardens

i' t' pawnd those wha's been sic nonny-hommers as to trust thee, wilt bag?"

"I say silence!" vociferated Briggs, who hated all brawling but of his own making. "You, mistress, be pleased to keep a civil tongue in your head when you speak to an officer in the Parliamentarian service, and, above all, forbear from referring to any past difficulties under which Lieutenant Croker may have laboured, since he has fully cleared himself from every inconvenient debt, by forsaking all and following the good cause."

"Good lackins!" cried Bridget, holding up her hands and eyes, "did ever mortal body hear o' sic a way o' keeping the eighth command? Why, Master Briggs, thou doesn't say this be law?"

"I tell thee, woman, that if any be in debt or difficulty he shall clear all by freely entering into the service of the Parliament," replied Briggs.

“ Unless his creditor should hap to be a roundhead colonel, or sic like,” observed Wat Sorby.

“ Hold your peace, you insolent varlet, or I will have your tongue bored,” growled Briggs.

“ My tongue trusts to bore your ears for many a good year first, and to help sing your neck verse withal, neighbour Briggs,” returned Walter.

“ ‘ Neighbour Briggs,’ you low-born reprobate! How dare you use such an epithet, either speaking to me or of me?”

“ I dare speak the truth at any time,” returned Sorby, “ and in any company. As for calling you neighbour, it is a fact, for so you are; and I mention the matter as a misfortune, not as a boast.”

“ Peace, peace, Sorby!” interrupted Philipson, who knew that Briggs would not be sorry to break the hollow truce between them, on account of his superior force; and he felt

unwilling to make the place of Althea's rest the scene of a skirmish.

“I perceive,” continued he, addressing Briggs, “that Bridget has, in her ignorance of such matters, handed you ‘Mercurius Aulicus,’ while to me she has given Marchmont's ‘Perfect Diurnal.’ Now, as I have no more inclination to the pestilence of your party than you have to the loyalty of mine, I propose a peaceable exchange of papers through the agency of Bridget, who can be our herald on the occasion.”

Briggs signified his assent by an ungracious nod, and Bridget having exchanged the papers, each gentleman proceeded to their perusal—but not in silence. Philipson occasionally broke into uncontrollable fits of laughter, appearing to enjoy with keen relish the strokes of satire levelled by the witty Aulicus against the Parliament and its adherents. The divisions which at that period were beginning to appear between the Inde-

pendents and the Presbyterians, while it afforded an inexhaustible fund for the cutting ridicule of Sir John Birkenhead in his humorous journal, proved, on the other hand, matter for such lamentations in the rival diurnal Briggs was reading, that it excited occasional notes of disapprobation and vexation. These were echoed by the ready groans of Bethuliel and the grunts of the rest of the troopers, who augured ill tidings from the demeanour of their leader. At length the vehement thirst for news with which Bethuliel was afflicted prompted him to exclaim :

“ Why art thou so heavy, righteous commander ? Hath any evil chanced to the chosen vessels of the nation ? ”

“ Nothing, good Bethuliel,” replied Briggs, without looking up, nothing worth noting, only we will in our next pouring forth heartily pray that the friends of the parliament may all hang together.”

“Amen, amen!” interposed Sorby, “and the sooner it is done, the better.”

“Fellow!” returned Briggs, “I do not mean as thou meanest, but that they may all hang in *accord* together.”

“A hempen cord is neatest for the purpose,” shouted Sorby; “but no matter what sort of a cord, so that it be long enough and strong enough to hang them all together, as you say.”

Walter’s sally was received with a shout of laughter from his own party. Colonel Briggs, conscious that he ever came off second best in the war of words, took the prudent part of preserving a dignified silence. Bethuliel having determined to vent his choler in a sermon, hastily lifted one of the high-backed narrow-seated chairs, on the oaken dresser, arranged it pulpit fashion, mounted it, and standing on the seat, thrusting his face over the back, which was turned towards the company. When he had placed

himself in this situation, which his zeal did not permit him to perceive, was rather a ticklish one, he proceeded to clear his throat by crying, “Hi ! ha ! hum !” three times, then turning up his eyes till nothing but the whites were visible, he commenced :

“Men and brethren—take note, by the word brethren I mean not Major Philipson, Wat Sorby, or the other malignants, their aiders and abettors, in opposing and o'erthrowing the goodly work which I and Colonel Briggs are helping this chosen parliament to bring to perfection. No, my brethren, I mean by brethren the saints of the church in Lancashire and Westmorland ; but by church, take notice my masters, I do not mean them papist houses with steeples at one end, looking even as if they were spawns from the Tower of Babel, perking themselves over the land. Whereas they be full of unclean vessels of idolatry, such as pipes that whistle papist tunes, also brazen bellowing bells. The

church that I am labouring to point out is not builded of flint stones or hewn stones, but of such goodly material as myself, the colonel, and yourselves——”

“Barren as flints in bringing forth good works,” interrupted Wat Sorby.

“Good works ! who mentions good works ?” ejaculated the preacher, in a tone of horror, “good works lead to popery, and with such we have nought to do !”

“So truth will out, despite of the dule,” rejoined Sorby, laughing.

But Bethuliel, who had just bethought him of a goodly figure wherewith to adorn his oration, deigned not to notice Sorby’s interruption.

“Oh !” he exclaimed, “that my sword might become as a besom of destruction, to sweep from the land the three pestilent p’s—Prelacy, Peers, and Popery !”

A loud laugh from Philipson and Sorby followed this rhetorical flower. The orator

eyed them askance, but the opportunity of holding forth to a congregation of mixed opinions was too precious to be lost, so he proceeded in these words :

“ Brethren, I have hitherto only prefaced a goodly pouring forth with a suitable exhortation and explanation. I will now give you a text that ought to be graven on our head-pieces and breast-plates, ‘ *For Tophet is ordained of old, for the King it is prepared.*’ Yea, for King Charles himself.”

“ How’d there, thou blasphemous carr’on,” cried Sorby, relapsing in his passion into the Lancashire dialect and accent, which was not his usual speech. “ We ha’ borne wi’ thee ower long for the sake of hearing thee confess thyself a fool outright—but if the sacred name of King Charles be profaned, Wat Sorby will uphold it agen ye all, be ye ten to one.”

So saying, he gave the leg of the chair that served the orator for a pulpit, a sudden jerk,

and that so vigorously applied, that the top-heavy and tottering rostrum instantly overturned ; the luckless preacher was precipitated from his perilous elevation, and fell violently with his face on the slate floor, beating out against it several of his front teeth, and dreadfully bruising his mouth and nose.

The troopers flew to arms in order to revenge the insult and injury their comrade had received. Philipson and Briggs drew their swords. At the same instant Sorby arranged the clubmen, while Bridget and her damsel screamed, and with shrill voices besought them all to keep the peace.

“ I have lost my best man, for certain,” thought Briggs, glancing round at Bethuliel, who was wont to be his right hand of war, but was now reclining over the arm of the oaken settle, pale as a corpse, and bleeding copiously at the mouth and nose, scarcely conscious of the comfortable prognostics of Coniah Croker, who had taken his pipe from

his mouth to assure the sufferer that he had certainly ruptured a blood-vessel in his fall, and could not survive three hours.

Briggs called to Croker in an authoritative tone :

“ To your post, lieutenant, in the name of the parliament ! ”

“ Master Briggs,” replied Croker, very coolly reloading his pipe as he spoke, “ I am at my post.”

“ How so ? ” asked Briggs, sharply.

“ Even at the post to which General Fairfax hath appointed me, to raise recruits for the service of the parliament.” Then taking a match from the belt of one of the troopers, he thrust it deliberately into the fire to light his pipe. “ Dowse ha’d this match, its wetted wi’ sawt water, and won’t burn. I wonder how the powther fares in the troopers’ pouches ? There’ll be no popping off shot and bullets this bout. So, sir, as you are no commanding officer of mine, being in a different division,

sir, I deem his orders to be superior to yours, sir, and I don't how'd myself under necessity to obey your authority, sir, specially to take up your private quarrels, sir——”

“ My private quarrels ?” cried Briggs ; “ is it not in the cause of the parliament that I am about to engage that unbeloved cavalier, Robert Philipson ?”

“ No, sir, it is no such thing, it is because he hath a better title to Calgarth than yourself, and for now’t else, unless it be that the lassie aboun stair casts a kinder glint on him than upon you ; and I, Coniah Croker, see no reason why Coniah Croker’s head should run risk of being broken in any sic fray, and ’tis my opinion that it’s no concernment to any one but yourselves, and I would advise the troopers and carles on either side to do as I am about to do—sit still, and smoke a quiet pipe, while you and Master Philipson fight it out single-handed.

“ An excellent proposal,” cried · Philipson.

“What say you to our deciding the point at issue by the chivalric model of Chevy Chase?

Let thou and I the battle try,
And set our men aside—

and Althea Woodville shall, of course, be free to wed the conqueror if she will.”

Here Briggs, whose patience was completely exhausted, commenced the attack by aiming a desperate stroke with his broad-sword, at the uncovered head of Philipson, taking advantage of what he thought an unguarded moment. Philipson, equally quick-sighted and active, parried the blow with admirable address, and returned the compliment with a slash across the shoulder, which, though broken by the defensive armour worn at that period, drew blood. The skirmish now became general, all parties being engaged except Bethuliel, who was incapable even of defensive warfare, and Master Croker, who retired into one of the deepest

recesses of the chimney-corner, after taking the precaution of placing one of the high-backed chairs as a fortification before him to defend his person and his pipe, sat smoking and lamenting the loss of his supper, which appeared inevitable.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE fierce encounter between Briggs and Philipson was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of Althea, whom the clash of swords and the outcries of Bridget and the maid, had attracted to the spot. Pale as a spectre, with her long dark hair hanging damp and dishevelled over her black riding-dress, she stood in the grey light of the early morning, which was stealing through the diamonded casements of the Traveller's Rest, and gazed in speechless horror on the scene it revealed. One of the peasants was slain, and two of the troopers were lying desperately wounded on the ground.

“Colonel Briggs,” said she, “for the love of heaven, put an end to this frightful strife, and take me to your sister. I am ready to go anywhere to escape from such dreadful doings.” She sank on a seat as she spoke, covered her eyes, and wept hysterically.

“Althea, loveliest, dearest! you whom I have preserved from a watery grave; will you thus abandon me?” cried Philipson, hastening to support her.

He had received a slight wound on the left hand, from which the blood flowed fast, but not sufficiently to dim the fire of his eyes, or lower the heightened colour that flushed his cheek, his rich chestnut hair fell in disordered ringlets round his face, as he stood by Althea’s side, sword in hand, at once an object of terror and beauty.

“Go, go!” exclaimed she, waving him back, “you have been shedding blood! Take me away, Colonel Briggs, take me from this horrible place.”

“Madam, I am willing to please you in this as in all reasonable requests ;” said Colonel Briggs, “but it will be necessary to settle how the journey is to be performed, as we have lost the coach, and another could not arrive from Calgarth Hall for several hours. Will it please you to ride behind me on horseback ?”

“No,” said Althea, “I will ride singly.”

“Provided a lady’s saddle-horse and saddle are to be procured here,” observed Briggs.

Bridget boasted the possession of a dapple grey mare, and a queer, leathern convenience which she called a lady’s saddle, having a pendent wooden shoe by way of stirrup.

While the dapple mare was saddling, Althea partook of breakfast in her bed-chamber, a breakfast consisting of porridge, cream, oaten-cakes, and a new-laid egg, the luxuries of tea, coffee, and chocolate being then unknown.

Soon after sunrise Colonel Briggs sent to

acquaint Althea that the mare was ready, and himself and retinue waiting her pleasure to start.

Colonel Briggs with a solemn attempt at gallantry, placed her on the mare, and inducted her small, graceful foot, into the wooden shoe, while the ostler, placing a hazel twig in her hand as a substitute for a whip, shouted in an encouraging tone, “Pu’ up bridle, and set off at fu’ gallop like a braw lassie as thee be.”

Althea, though heartily ashamed of these unwonted equestrian appointments, was always at ease on horseback. She looked round for Major Philipson ; he was near, having loitered to see her off. She waved her hand twice in acknowledgment of his farewell obeisance, and then rode on with Colonel Briggs and his *meine*.

Their journey lay over the hills above the valley of the Winster for several miles ; at length, after climbing a rugged hill, they

descended just above Storrs, where the fair lake of Windermere, with her green hills and budding spring garlands, lay like a sheet of crystal before them. All was now bright and beautiful ; Althea felt the fresh, delicious mountain air, revive her sad spirit with bracing influence.

The sorry hackney on which she rode was, however, jaded with the journey they had performed, and positively refused to pass the posting-house in the then small village of Bowness. She silently looked at Briggs for directions.

“ It is as well,” said he, “ for us to halt here, and send one of the men forward to Calgarth, to inform my sister of last night’s mishap to the coach, and request her to send her own. I would not you should be seen by the servants mounted on such a beast as this vile hack, and with no better saddle and caparisons.”

He then issued his orders to one of the

troopers, assisted Althea to dismount, led her into the hostelry and ordered some refreshments, for though the distance to Calgarth was scarcely more than five miles, he calculated that it would be upwards of two hours before the coach arrived, and he perceived that his ward was thoroughly exhausted with her long rough ride from Hest Bank, the excitement and fatigue of the preceding day, and the night of unrest she had passed.

She now gladly availed herself of the landlady's considerate offer of retiring with her to a bedroom and reposing herself quietly till the arrival of the coach from Calgarth. She felt the loss of her maid's attendance and humble sympathy very sensibly, and after she had rested for a while, and partaken of a warm cup of milk and some oaten cake, she accepted the services of the landlady's niece, Lucy Graythwaite, in smoothing her disordered dress and dishevelled tresses, and felt considerably refreshed when she had

enjoyed the comfort of bathing her aching temples and swollen eyes, and laving her hands in a large basin of water.

“Will it please thee, my lady, to step to t’ window and look at t’ bonny isle o’ Long Holme?” said Lucy, when Althea had finished her ablutions. “Thou winna see sic a fair view o’ it frae Calgarth Haugh. Yonder be our Lady’s Isle, and t’ Lily of the Valley Isle.”

Althea looked with admiration on the lovely archipelago of fairy islets which gemmed the bosom of Windermere; while she yet gazed, a light swift sailing-boat, with a green pennon, darted like a kingfisher over the waters towards the Long Holme Island from Fell Foot.

“That be t’ Major’s own boat,” cried Lucy, with great animation: “he’ll be in it his own self by t’ green flag.”

“What major?” asked Althea, her pale cheek mantling with crimson as she spoke.

“Bonny Robin Philipson o’ t’ Holme, my lady, dunna ye ken that he is now at t’ Long Holme?” said Lucy.

Althea looked with redoubled interest at the green wooded island now she had heard it was the home of the brave young cavalier who had preserved her from a watery grave on the preceding night, at the imminent risk of his own life. How pleasant it was to know he was so near her and in safety. Presently she heard him wind his bugle, and awaken all the slumbering echoes on the Furness Fells, which repeated and prolonged the enlivening sound from all their mystic caves.

“ ‘Tis just to let his folks at t’ Holme know he is coming,” observed Lucy, “lo! now he pointeth for t’ landings. Good speed to him, and right welcome will he be to t’em aw.”

Althea was summoned to descend on arrival of the coach and servants from Cal-

garth. With a heavy heart she obeyed, and passively allowed her guardian to place her in the carriage and seat himself beside her.

Shrouding herself in her veil, she shrank back in her corner and closed her eyes to avoid conversing with her companion, who for his part preserved an unbroken silence till they arrived at the gates of Calgarth Park.

CHAPTER XXII.

CALGARTH OLD HALL, as it is at present, affords no adequate notion of the ancient grandeur and original extent of the edifice which is now reduced to a farm-house of very picturesque appearance, with turret-like chimneys wreathed with ivy. The moat which once surrounded it is now choked up with the exception of a narrow runlet on one side adjoining the Troutbeck, but its former channel may easily be traced. Many of the striking features of the mansion remain, especially the long state gallery, or drawing-room, with its oak-panelled walls and richly emblazoned ceiling, having carved medallions

charged with armorial bearings, Tudor roses, bell-flowers, and grapes; from the centre of each medallion are the pendants which formerly supported the cressets that lighted the gallery. A mighty oaken beam wreathed with elaborately carved vine-leaves and clustering bunches of grapes, runs the whole length of the gallery, which has been curtailed of its original length to allow a bedroom to be parted off. The old banqueting-hall is on the ground floor, paved with large black slates. Though now degraded into a kitchen and sub-divided offices, it retains the broad mullioned window of other days, with the arms of Miles Philipson, Kt., and Janet Laborne, his wife, in stained glass; the spacious chimney with the low broad Tudor arch, and the family escutcheon of Philipson —three boars' heads, with a bend surmounting it; also another family shield, charged with a dragon and the characteristic motto of its former lords: *Fide non fraude.*

Calgarth Old Hall is seated in the green flowery valley of Troutbeck, nestled under the lee of the Wansfell range to the right, with the glorious panorama of the Troutbeck hills, and the ancient Roman road now called High Street behind, and Elleray soaring in mid-air to the right. Calgarth Hall fronts the lake of Windermere, and commands an extensive prospect of the high Furness Fells on the opposite shore, in all their varied forms of fantastic grandeur—the wild, the wondrous, and sublime. Down the lake it looks to the picturesque group of isles which gem the breast of Windermere, and upwards to the sea of mountains beyond Ambleside, Rydal, and Grasmere. With what ecstasy would Althea have looked on this scenery, so beautiful and new to her, if Colonel Briggs had not been at her side, and carrying her thither more as a prisoner than a guest!

No trace now remains of the embattled gateway by which the travellers entered the

lovely well-wooded park, nor of the ponderous drawbridge that was hastily lowered at their approach, to enable the carriage to cross the then broad moat that, uniting with the lake, defended the mansion from attacks by land. Calgarth Old Hall was, at that time, a fortified house, built round a quadrangle, and in the frontal elevation, long since destroyed, the principal entrance was situated —a broad arched portal defended by a portcullis.

Althea's heart died within her as the coach rolled heavily over the drawbridge under the portcullis, and across the court where, at the hall-door, leading to the state apartments that fronted the lake, stood a stiff, austere-looking lady in the decline of life, clad in russet weeds, a pinched lawn coif and black hood, in readiness to receive her.

“My sister, Mistress Kezia Briggs,” said the roundhead colonel.

It scarcely needed this announcement; the

likeness between them told its own tale of their consanguinity and similarity in creed and party. At a second glance, Althea detected a strong family resemblance to her deceased mother, Lady Woodville, in her mature spinster cousin, which somewhat softened the feelings of antipathy excited by her puritan costume and deportment. Colonel Briggs, now descending from the coach, assisted Althea to alight, and with a solemn attempt at courtesy, said :

“ Welcome to Calgarth Hall, cousin Althea ! After all the merciful deliverances of which we have been recipient during our late perilous journey. I have brought you to a peaceful haven, which from henceforth you are to consider as your home ; surely it is a pleasant place, and will be fairer still in summertide, which is now approaching, and I trust you will be happy in the society of that godly woman, my sister, and your cousin Mistress Kezia Briggs.”

He took Althea's hand, and in accordance with the custom of the period, attempted to imprint a kiss on her lips.

Althea scornfully rejected the caress, and threw herself, as if for protection, into the arms of her kinswoman, clung to her and buried her face in her bosom, with a passionate burst of tears.

“As you will,” observed Briggs, with a sullen askance: “it is the first time that I have offered a civility of the kind to a daughter of malignancy, but I thought it behoved me, as master of Calgarth Hall, to give you, my cousin, the kiss of peace before you crossed the threshold of my house.”

“You take the matter too seriously, cousin Woodville,” observed Mrs. Kezia Briggs, after embracing and kissing Althea; “it is, I assure you, maiden, a common ceremony in the north among kinsfolk, and my brother, as you see, is not a young man, to presume on the familiarity which cousinship is supposed

to allow. He is your guardian, and you must learn to look upon him in the light of a father."

"Ay," replied Althea, "if he would confine himself to that vocation, I would treat him with the respect due to my lamented mother's kinsman and friend."

"I see you have been jarring on the journey," observed Mrs. Kezia, "but you will get accustomed to my brother in time; he is not used to courtly ladies, his manners are blunt, and not what the world calls polite. He means well, nevertheless, so dry your eyes and come into my parlour and warm you, for you are colder than marble, poor child, and well-nigh famished, I guess."

"I am weary," said Althea, "and would fain retire to my own apartment, my dress is sadly disordered, and having been deprived of my maid by Colonel Briggs, I scarcely know how to perform the duties of the toilet in a

manner suitable to appear before you and the members of the household."

"Never trouble yourself about dress, the plainer your array is the better we shall like it, cousin Althea. Some of your mails have arrived by the south waggon, and will be found in the chamber I have appropriated to your use." She then led Althea into a bedroom, the same that had formerly been occupied, Mrs. Kezia assured her, by her lamented mother, Lady Woodville, in her maiden days. She then offered her the services of her own waiting-woman, Kerenhappuch Cross-thwaite, whom she commended "as a godly and discreet handmaiden, who eschewed the vice of flattery, and always spoke the truth."

"Truly," replied Althea, "I have an especial dislike to people of that kind, and would much prefer waiting on myself."

"Fie! cousin Althea; do not you love to hear the truth?"

“My dear madam, I cannot abide uncivil speeches from any one—least of all from a waiting-maid.”

“Oh! what a deadly sin is pride,” ejaculated Mrs. Kezia.

“Is the pride that lurks under straight hair and a pinched coif less deadly than that which flaunts in feathers and lovelocks?” asked Althea.

“You are apt and bold of speech, damsel,” observed Mrs. Kezia, scrutinizing Althea with her sharp intelligent eyes; then telling her she would leave her to rest till supper, which would be served at six, she withdrew.

Althea having obtained a necessary change of dress from one of the portmanteaus she found in this apartment, changed her travel-soiled garments, and reduced her dishevelled ringlets to a more orderly appearance, and then proceeded to take a survey of the room. It was situated in an angle of the mansion,

with two broad windows, one looking on the lake, the other towards Elleray. They were festooned and curtained with heavy satin damask, of that deep melancholy blue which is more mournful than black. The bed was canopied with carved oak, and had hangings like the window-curtains. The walls were panelled with black oak, highly polished ; so was the bare parqueted floor. Three narrow strips of needlework, wrought in worsteds in a tasteless pattern surrounded the bed, and there was a hearthrug to correspond. A lofty carved oak wardrobe, a heavy table, an inconvenient toilet, with a large glass in an ebony frame, draperied with deep blue gauze, and placed in the worst possible light for dressing, four high-backed narrow-seated chairs and a washing-stand, completed the furniture of the room she was thenceforth to consider her own. There were also two shelves filled with books in black bindings. On examination she found they all consisted of polemic divinity of the

reign of Queen Elizabeth, and were for the most part printed at Geneva, being of the Martin Marprelate school, a style of writing rigorously interdicted by that queen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE clang of the supper-bell roused Althea from pursuing her researches, and, after brushing the dust from her dress and washing it from her hands, she obeyed the summons of Kerenhappuch, who guided her to the drawing-room, where Colonel and Mrs. Kezia Briggs were waiting for her to descend to supper. They were attended by a tall, square, long-backed personage wearing stiff lawn cuffs and bands, and a black silk cap closely fitted to his head and carefully tucked behind his ears, which protruded from his head looking as though they were indefatigable

listeners. He had a more than ordinary length of upper lip, a strong cast in both eyes, which made it difficult to ascertain the precise person whom he favoured with his regards, a wide thin mouth, and a high narrow head.

Mrs. Kezia Briggs introduced him to Althea as worthy Master Elkanah Nobbs, the family chaplain, a faithful and painful preacher of the word.

Colonel Briggs looked at his watch and observed that it was half an hour beyond the usual hour for supper ; then offered his arm to Althea, and led her down to the banqueting-hall. After a long essay on the unsatisfactory nature of creature comforts by way of grace, they seated themselves at the well-covered board, and the chaplain did such ample justice to the good cheer, that Althea marvelled how it was possible for him to indulge so good an appetite and yet preserve his lean and hungry looks.

Thanks were returned in another long extempore homily, the attendants placed sweet-meats, fruit, and wine on the table, and retired. Mrs. Kezia Briggs helped her young kinswoman to such things as she fancied would be most acceptable to her taste. Colonel Briggs recommended her to taste his claret, assuring her it would not be a sinful indulgence if she drank a couple of glasses after her fatiguing journey. When Althea declined, Elkanah Nobbs persuasively observed :

“ Peradventure the young mistress would prefer it made into a bishop, since she affecteth not the good creature in its natural state.”

“ I do not understand the joke,” said Althea, drily.

“ Verily, a bishop is no joke, but in that sense an excellent thing,” rejoined Elkanah, rubbing his hands; “ and it would give me marvellous content if you would allow me to

dress a bishop for our refection after duty done in chapel this even.

“How is it done, Nobbs?” asked Colonel Briggs.

“Take a quince, large and fair, like this,” replied the chaplain, pointing as he spoke to a quince which he had detected among a dish of winter pears; “scoop out his eye, and pierce him all over the body with a lady’s silver bodkin, stick him full of cloves, tie a string to his tail, hang him up to roast thereby before the fire, sift sugar upon him diligently as he roasteth till he is well incrusted and soft to the core; then pour a bottle of claret into a silver skillet, with four ounces of honey and the rind of a lemon, plunge the spiced quince into it, and you will have a cup fit for the speaker of the parliament.”

“A very good remedy for a cold from exposure to damp,” observed Mrs. Kezia Briggs. “You shall prepare the quince according to

your recipe, reverend sir, and we will partake of the cup after we return from chapel; but I am losing the precious time," continued she, "in discoursing of these sensual matters;" so saying, she drew from her capacious pocket a black leathern case, containing her gold-clasped Geneva Bible, and covering her face with her hand, offered up a silent prayer. Then opening the sacred volume with deep and unaffected reverence, she was in a few moments so completely absorbed in its study, as to be quite unconscious of anything around her.

Briggs produced the muster-roll of his regiment, which he amused himself by conning over, every now and then writing a sentence with his pencil against the names of the individuals it contained, probably some observation of his own on their characters or spiritual gifts. Elkanah Nobbs appeared as deeply engaged in "Calvin's Institutes," bound in sheepskin. Althea was thus left to the enjoy-

ment of her own contemplations, without book, needlework, or conversation. Her thoughts did not happen to be in a pleasant train just then, for she could think of nothing but the monotonous life she was like to lead at Calgarth Hall for the next few months.

Oppressed by weariness of spirit, after a dull half-hour had passed she unconsciously sighed deeply. Elkanah Nobbs, on whose capacious ears no sound ever fell unheard, looked up from Master John Calvin and asked her “wherefore she groaned in spirit?”

“Ridiculous,” answered Althea. “Dost think, Master Nobbs, that I cannot live half a day in a puritan’s house, without catching the manners of the inhabitants?”

“Verily, maiden, mine ears did deceive me strangely, if thou didst not sigh heavily, said the chaplain.

“And is there no difference, think you,”

replied Althea, “between a groan and a sigh?”

“I have heard of lovers’ sighs,” answered Elkanah; “peradventure thy sigh was sent on some such unprofitable mission?”

Briggs laid down his muster-roll and fixed a scrutinizing regard on Althea’s face, and Mrs. Kezia looked up from her Geneva Bible. “Ay,” she observed, “such sighs are the idolatrous incense offered by sinful mortals to the creature instead of the Creator, those who lack sorrow, and are given up to the deceitfulness of their own imaginations are wont to make unto themselves a fancied grief, which they foolishly cherish and falsely call love; which same is a feeling of creature-worship and is at enmity with God. Cast it from thee, Althea, if it be dearer to thee than a right eye or a right hand; for of all the deceipts of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is the worst.”

“Nay, madam,” replied Althea, smiling,

“your lecture is misplaced, since, among all my troubles, love has no share.”

“Whence that sigh, then?” asked Master Elkanah, whose curiosity was by no means satisfied.

“Really, sir, I am not accustomed to be catechized, save by a clergyman of my own church, and they never inquire into such delicate matters as ladies’ sighs.”

“Because,” returned the chaplain, “they are the unwary shepherds that suffer the wolf to steal into the fold the while they slumber and sleep. But I tell thee that thine is a church which shall be cast down, its candlestick removed, and its lamp clean put out.”

“Althea disdained to enter into controversy with such an opponent. A pause ensued, and all parties seemed inclined to lapse into their former silence, till Master Nobbs again returned to the charge by saying, “I pray thee, maiden, tell me wherefore thou didst sigh even now?”

“If I must give an account of such a momentous matter as an accidental sigh,” replied Althea, smiling at his pertinacity, “I believe it was from want of occupation; for I have felt most weary this afternoon from that cause.”

“Why, then, did you not seek some employment, maiden?” asked Mistress Kezia.

“How could I, madam?” replied Althea; all my requisites for embroidery, drawing, or music were lost crossing the sands.”

True it was that Althea’s costly ebony workbox, inlaid with gold, and furnished amply with all the implements and materials requisite for female ingenuity, that had long awaited her convenience against she should be industriously disposed, was no longer within reach now she did feel so, and that for the first time in her life too. It was passing singular, she thought, that she should never have had any use for that gift from a wise mother till it was gone past all recovery.

Her colours, pencils, and brushes, with a case full of fine paper and vellum, prepared satins and taffetas, and all her materials for delineating natural flowers or landscapes were lost ; together with that carefully-packed box of highly-valued volumes of romance and poetry ; her Spenser, Shakespeare, and Sidney ; her Amadis and Palmerin ; her Italian Ariosto, and that done into English by the quaint and ingenious Sir John Harrington ; the amatory sonnets of the gallant and unfortunate Surrey ; the more recently published poems of the tender Herrick ; and that prized manuscript volume, bound in rose-coloured satin, copied and presented by no other hand than that of the elegant Edmund Waller ; all these, in company with the finest-toned lute in England, together with many other valuables of hers which, for the greater security, she had taken with her in Colonel Briggs' travelling carriage, were now sunk full fathom five in the quicksand.

“ You now, madam, will no longer wonder at my want of employment,” continued Althea, after enumerating these losses ; “ seeing that I am deprived at once of all my resources for that purpose.”

“ So much the better, cousin Woodville ; so much the better,” replied Mrs. Kezia ; “ I rejoice to hear that some of your vanities and idols are removed from you.”

“ Nay, then, wherefore did you reprove me even now for remaining unoccupied ?”

“ And think you not, Althea Woodville, that I would to the full as soon see your fingers unemployed, as engaged in the profitless follies as those whereof you speak ?”

“ Are not these things the main points in the education of all ladies of my rank and breeding ?”

“ Yes, cousin Althea, it is with these specious vanities that the outside of the cup is adorned, while the inside is left full of deadly things.”

“I am not convinced, however,” said Althea, “that there is the least harm in the pleasing and elegant pursuits of embroidery and painting.”

“Are they not useless, cousin Althea; and is not waste of time sinful?”

Althea was silenced, for the use and abuse of time was a question that had never before been pressed on her consideration.

“Wayward though you be,” observed Mrs. Kezia, “I see that you are too candid to maintain a bad cause.”

“Dear madam,” replied Althea, “I cannot allow you to give me praise for candour, because my silence really does not proceed from conviction; for I do not consider it any waste of time to touch the lute, or paint, or embroider flowers. It would be wrong, I agree, if I were in a station of life in which I had household duties or the work of a sempstress to perform. But situated as I am, how should I be able to occupy my time, except-

ing with the elegant acquirements which you so much condemn?"

"And think you, Althea Woodville, that existence was given you for no other purpose than to be trifled away in what you call elegant pursuits? Can you blind yourself to the fact that you have duties to perform, although fortune has exempted you from those of the sempstress or housewife? but I cry you mercy, you spake a while ago of the duties of the toilet, which, I suppose, comprises all the duties of a cavalier baronet's daughter?"

"Had you spared that concluding taunt," replied Althea, indignantly, "I could have acknowledged the truth of what you have just been saying, and thanked you, madam, for the wholesome medicine you have administered, albeit you are a rougher physician than I have been wont to deal with, but insult never did nor ever will have any other effect on me than to rouse indignation and disdain."

“ I was to blame, cousin Althea, and I crave your indulgence for the infirmity of my temper. You see, my child, the frailty of our erring nature. I was quick at discerning your fault, and perceived not the beam in mine own eye. Alas ! we never know of what spirit we are.”

This acknowledgment of error was not lost upon the warm and generous heart of Althea.

“ I doubt not but we shall be very good friends now,” said she, “ although I did not anticipate as much before I came to Calgarth Hall ; for, in good truth, I could not believe it possible to like a sister of Colonel Briggs.”

“ Colonel Briggs is greatly beholden to you, my mistress,” said Briggs, in a huff.

“ And why should the near relationship in which I stood to him have predisposed you to dislike me ?” asked Mrs. Kezia.

“ Because, madam, I thought that there

must be some resemblance in character between you; and you cannot have known him so many years without being aware that your brother possesses every quality that can render him disagreeable to a lady."

" You seem to forget, Mistress Althea Woodville, that I am present to hear your exceedingly obliging report of me," said Briggs, turning very white, and dropping the corners of his under lip; " ay, and mayhap will remember it, too, when we twain are wedded; so take heed what passeth your lips."

" For the very reason that you have the folly to pretend to my hand, do I speak these things so explicitly," replied Althea, quickly.

" Folly, indeed!" said Mrs. Kezia. " Why, brother Bartholomew, if you had any thought of becoming a wooer, it should be to some respectable widow of your own faith and

party, or to some devout, middle-aged spinster, like myself. There be many of our classes, man, among which you might doubtless find one, who, in consideration of your high principles, godly profession, and fair estate, would willingly become your yoke-fellow, and make you a loving and cherishing spouse, without your being reduced to expose yourself to the scoffs and rejection of a damsel like our fair and quick-witted kinswoman, who in respect to you is a mere child, and in every way unsuitable to you."

Althea laughed with mischievous glee at these words.

" Dear Mrs. Kezia, what sensible advice you offer to your brother. Cannot you persuade him to ask Master Coniah Croker, whether he have not a sister to bestow on him in marriage?"

" What acquaintance you as a stranger in this part of the world can have with Master Coniah Croker, I cannot even guess," replied

Mrs. Kezia. “I only have heard of him as the bankrupt grocer of Preston, and should consider a sister of his a very unsuitable person for a man of my brother’s family and position in the county.”

“I did not expect to find family distinctions regarded among those who profess to fight for a commonwealth, and to uphold the dogma of equality,” returned Althea.

“Ah, child, are you then surprised at finding inconsistencies among us? But there must be a time for all things, and a season for us to subdue those prejudices that we have as it were drawn in with our very milk.”

“I doubt the time will never come for me to walk in your way,” replied Althea.

“Go to; you are young, and the yoke as yet seemeth grievous to you,” observed Master Elkanah Nobbs; “but if you will now listen to me, I will lead you to our Ebenezer, the chapel hard by, and feed you with the Word, as the whole house-

hold are to join in returning thanks for the late signal preservation of their master from being washed away by the tides."

Althea coldly declined accompanying him.

"If you are so perverse as to refuse the gracious invitation of good Master Nobbs," interposed Briggs, "you shall be enforced to attend the chapel."

"I thought, sir," replied Althea, "that you had been by this time convinced how difficult it is to carry any disputed point with me by force. I never have yielded to compulsion and never will."

"Brother," said Mrs. Kezia, "it is matter of surprise as well as sorrow to me to observe the very ill terms on which you appear to be with our young kinswoman. I protest that ye have not been six hours the inhabitants of the same house before ye have quarrelled thrice. Fie upon ye both; can ye not live like Christians, and eschew all contentious matter of discourse. If she will not to chapel to-

night, why then she must remain where she is. But I should like much to know what you have done to render yourself so much an object of aversion to Althea."

"Done!" growled Briggs, "nothing but what it was my duty to do."

"Ha," cried Althea, with flashing eyes, "was it any part of your duty to oblige me to cross the sands with you at such an improper time, merely because you were afraid to stay in the vicinity of Major Philipson, and then to leave me to perish miserably? Was that your duty as a man and a guardian?

Briggs twisted his cuff-band, looked foolish, and at last stammered out:

"Self-preservation is a duty to which all men are bound."

"Ah, doubtless, it is with you the very first of duties. But, fortunately for me, there were those who considered the preservation of a friendless, deserted woman, as a duty

superior to any selfish consideration," returned Althea.

Elkanah Nobbs shuffled nearer, with a look of hungry curiosity, hoping from these hints that his capacious ears would be feasted with some wholly new intelligence. His respect and awe for his patron prevented him from making any inquiry on the subject, but he saw from the quick glance of Mrs. Kezia that she was about to demand an explanation.

"Brother, to what does Althea allude?" asked she.

Briggs felt himself in a most awkward predicament. He was not a little angry with himself, and ashamed of the part he had acted, but his sister was the last person in the world to whom he wished his conduct in that business to be made known. As he kept an embarrassed silence, Mrs. Kezia required of Althea an explanation of the meaning of the words she had just addressed

to her guardian. Althea then without the least regard to Colonel Briggs' interruptions or interjections, proceeded to relate the whole particulars of their journey across the sands, with such faithful minuteness, as not to allow him an opportunity of charging her with exaggeration or misrepresentation; and she seasoned her narrative with such poignant raillery, that Briggs almost wished himself engulfed in the quicksand in which he had left her, to be out of the reach of her provoking satire. When Althea had finished, Mrs. Kezia solemnly asked her if she had spoken the truth.

“ I ween there is one in presence who would have esteemed himself happy just now if I would have given him an opportunity of contradicting me. Ask him if I have borne false witness against him.”

“ You have forgotten to relate, mistress, the errant coquetties you practised with that roystering fellow, Robert Philipson,”

observed Briggs, who wist not well what else to say.

“I have made Major Philipson as little my theme as was consistent with the true narration of events in which he bore so conspicuous and honourable a part,” said Althea, looking down, and blushing very deeply.

“I commend your discretion, cousin Althea,” said Mrs. Kezia; “yet had he not been the instrument ordained for the preservation of your life, I should have regretted any circumstance that made you acquainted with one so wild and godless as Robert Philipson.”

“He conducted himself in the most respectful manner towards me when I was entirely in his power,” said Althea.

“I am happy to hear any good of him,” returned Mrs. Kezia, “as he is a kinsman of ours; and I reckon that he must be in the same nearness of blood to you, Althea, which

may perhaps account for his unusual propriety of conduct, as he is generally esteemed a very graceless fellow. When my brother is at Calgarth, Robert Philipson hath often-times given us much interruption, though I cannot say he has at any time disturbed our quiet when Colonel Briggs is away. It is on account of the near neighbourhood of this godless and careless young man, that we have fortified the house, and entertained a company of men-at-arms, at all times, by way of garrison. I shall be very circumspect how I take you beyond the drawbridge, now I have learnt that he has some acquaintance with you, since the close vicinity of Holme Island will afford him but too many facilities of seeing you, if it likes him, and even of carrying you off, if such a mad scheme should get into his head."

"Then," said Althea, "I shall be when the drawbridge is up precisely in the case of a mouse in a trap."

“That will be indeed your condition to-night, my dear,” said Mrs. Kezia, “unless you accompany us in our act of worship to our little tabernacle, which formeth one side of the quadrangle, and is within the moat of our fenced city of refuge. If you do no go with us you must dispense with our company, as no one belonging to the household is held excused from joining the heads of the family in devotional exercise.”

“Ay,” rejoined Elkanah Nobbs, “and consider that it is no light matter to be left alone in a haunted house.”

“Then,” said Althea, smiling, “it seems I may have the chance of spending the time in spiritual company.”

“That you may be sure of employing it spiritually, if you are so disposed, I will supply you with the means,” said Mrs. Kezia, putting her Geneva Bible into Althea’s hand, and directing Kerenhappuch to light two wax candles, and place them on a small table by

Mistress Woodville, she repaired with Colonel Briggs, Master Elkanah Nobbs, and the household and garrison, to attend the service in the chapel.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FOR more than an hour after their departure Althea employed herself with equal sincerity and fervency in the perusal of the Sacred Volume left for her use. She would most willingly have continued so to employ herself, but the print was unusually small, and she felt that her eyes had suffered from want of rest the preceding night, and also from having wept profusely at times during her journey, and they now seemed unequal to dwelling longer on the book. In fact, the words floated in indistinct confusion before her, and she could no longer distinguish the sense of what she saw; so closing the book, she leaned

back in her chair, and covering her aching eyes with her hands, she fell into a train of musing, which was only interrupted by the continued patterning of the rain on the stones of the courtyard, the moaning of the gusty wind on the lake, and the incessant hooting of the owls that had taken up their abode in hollow ash-trees overhanging the moat.

“ All this is very dismal,” thought Althea, “ and this, it seems, is a haunted house too ; or did that squinting puritan only tell me so to deter me from remaining here alone, instead of accompanying his congregation to hear his precious discourses ? ”

The age of superstition had far from passed away, and Althea was not free from its influence. Involuntarily she glanced round the apartment ; its gloomy spaciousness was apparently increased by the panelling of dark carved wood that surrounded it, the dusky colour of which seemed to swallow up every ray of light, and made the gloomy length

of the apartment appear absolutely interminable.

“Truly, it has much the appearance of a ghostly abode,” observed Althea, half-frightened and half-laughing. “At any rate I have the sword of the Spirit at hand,” continued she, opening the clasps of the Bible. Once more she endeavoured to occupy herself in the perusal of the sacred contents, but the words appeared yet more indistinct than before, and she seemed like one who strives to read in a dream and cannot. She began now to wish that good Master Elkanah would bring his homily to a conclusion, becoming desirous of the return of the congregation, or at least some part of it. The great hall clock had proclaimed the hours of seven, eight, and nine, since the departure of all the inhabitants of the house to the chapel, herself alone excepted. The severe exertion and agitation that Althea had suffered during the last six and thirty hours now began to make

her feel such symptoms of fatigue and exhaustion that, could she have trusted her memory to find the way to her own chamber, most gladly would she have retired to rest; but she had a strong reluctance to the idea of traversing the gloomy staircases and intricate passages of the large uninhabited house alone; yet to remain where she was, with an excited imagination and illness stealing upon her, seemed as bad an alternative. While she was debating the point in her own mind, her attention was suddenly arrested by a slight sharp sound that seemed just at her elbow. There was nothing very alarming in the noise, which was so trifling as hardly to startle her; but a sudden dimness coming over the candles, she looked up to discover the cause of it, and with terror which may be better imagined than described, she perceived two human skulls lying on the little table close beside her.

Now in days like these, the lights of science have so completely dispelled the mists

of prejudice and common antipathies that skulls have become the playthings of many of our most *charmant bas-bleu*. The sight of such objects of mortality on a fair lady's reading table, far from filling her with horror, blanching her cheek, and curdling her blood, would have given her positive pleasure, if she chanced to be a practical phrenologist, and it is more than probable that instead of averting her eyes and uttering a deadly scream, as Althea did, she would immediately have proceeded very coolly to inspect the different protuberances on the said craniums, in order to form an opinion of what had been the intellectual faculties and moral qualifications of their late owners.

When Mrs. Kezia Briggs, her brother, and Master Elkanah Nobbs entered the drawing-room on their return from chapel, they were not a little surprised to find that Althea had fallen from her chair and lay in a deep swoon on the ground.

“What can be the meaning of this?” said Master Elkanah, who immediately surmised that something extraordinary had happened, and began to hunger for intelligence.

“The meaning of this?” replied Mrs. Kezia, raising Althea, and supporting her head on her lap. “I think you, Master Nobbs, were indiscreet enough to hint something concerning this being a haunted house, and the silly child no sooner found herself alone than she fancied that she saw a ghost, I suppose. However, I request that you and my brother will withdraw, and send my woman Kerenhappuch and some of the other handmaidens with smelling-bottles and strong waters.”

Master Elkanah withdrew reluctantly, as he hoped to be present when Althea revived, that he might stand a chance of hearing what had caused her swoon, for his wish to learn the particulars was rather sharpened than satisfied by his patroness’s surmise.

After the females had applied the usual restoratives, and Althea began to shew signs of returning life, Mrs. Kezia Briggs considered it most advisable to remove her into her own chamber. A few minutes after this had been effected, Althea unclosed her eyes, and throwing a terrified glance around her, exclaimed :

“Where are they? How came they there?”

“What mean you, cousin Woodville?” asked Mrs. Kezia, checking with an awful look the eager inquiries that sat on the lips of the attendant damsels.

“The skulls!” cried Althea, shuddering and hiding her face on Mrs. Kezia’s sleeve.

The maids exchanged significant looks, and drew closer together.

“Skulls, my child? You have been dreaming,” said Mrs. Kezia.

“Perhaps I have,” replied Althea, putting her hand to her forehead with a bewildered

look ; “ my head is sadly disordered still ; yet I could protest that I saw two human skulls on the table, just at my elbow, in the room below.”

There was a general but surprised murmur among the attendant group, who edged nearer to their mistress, as if for protection ; but her commanding glance of reproof caused them to retreat a little and restrained exclamations that seemed with difficulty suppressed.

“ This is the effect of fatigue and the danger and affright which befell in your late journeying,” said Mrs. Kezia, soothingly. “ You were dozing and vapourish, and your fantasy formed to you an ugly vision—nought else, my dear, believe me. I was wrong to have left you alone, instead of putting you comfortably into a warm bed, and administering a posset to you before I went to the chapel, where indeed the edifying discourses of good Master Nobbs delayed me longer than I expected.”

“ You then think, my dear madam, that all my terror proceeded from a vain dreaming fantasy ?” replied Althea, half persuaded out of the witness of her own senses.

“ Nothing more, I will answer for it,” said Mrs. Kezia.

“ The lorjus, how canst thee talk at that rate, mistress, when thee knowest fu’ well that strange lady mought ha’ seen the real awfu’ skulls o’ Calgarth !” broke forth Judy, the head housemaid, who was not a little scandalized at her lady’s attempt to reason Althea out of the evidence of her eyesight.

“ Ay, ay, strange Lunnon lady ha’ seen t’ skulls o’ Calgarth, that be mortal plain truth,” echoed all the other damsels in a breath.

“ What would the wode women be at ?” cried Mrs. Kezia, looking unutterable things at the conclave.

“ Neaw thee would make as though thee knewest nowt about in, mistress o’ mine, when

we ha' seen un wi' own eyes at aw parts o' the house," responded the incorrigible Judy. "Na, na, it's o' unco sma' use to wink an' pink at sic a gate, for thou'st towld us sa oft to speak nowt but truth, that 'twill owt neaw; and sarten as my name be Judy Marjoram, hoo ha' seen the vara frightsome skulls that ha' scared the whole house owt o' sense time owt o' mind."

"It seems, then, that others have seen this hideous appearance besides myself?" said Althea, gazing around her with expanded eyes. "Tell me," continued she, laying her hand on Mrs. Kezia's arm, "what may it portend?"

"Nothing, my child, but that you are vapourish, and that you have a set of superstitious simpletons about you."

Althea sighed deeply, and said:

"I shall feel the solitude of my own apartment as a trial to my courage after this. Would that I had the comfort of my faithful

maid's service and company to night; but Colonel Briggs commenced his tyrannical usage of me by dismissing her at Garstang, in spite of all remonstrances, leaving the poor girl far from her home and friends, and dragging me on against my will, without a female attendant, and that only two days after my dear mother had been laid in her grave."

She paused and sobbed passionately.

"Fie upon him!" exclaimed Mrs. Kezia Briggs. "I will try to induce him to behave better for the time to come, and will take passing good care of you myself, for your dear mother's sake."

"But what will become of my poor maid, left among strangers?" asked Althea.

"I will send a special person to Garstang to take charge of her, and bring her to you."

"What! here? to Calgarth?"

"Yes, yes; be calm! Say your prayers, and let me be your maid for once, and put you comfortably to bed, and all will be right."

Althea was persuaded to take a cup of sack-whey and a toast, resigned herself to the direction of her kinswoman, and, notwithstanding all she had gone through, slept soundly and even heavily. On awaking in the morning, she found that Mrs. Kezia Briggs had watched by her bedside during the whole night. Althea, greatly moved by this instance of kindness, was profuse not only in acknowledgments, but in expression of regret that she should have lost her night's rest through attention to her.

“ Cousin Althea,” replied Mrs. Kezia, “ I was unwilling to leave you either with one of our ignorant household maidens or by yourself, during the night season, as, in the first case, you might have been deprived of rest through the superstitious folly of others; and, in the second, by the devices of your own imagination, which is too apt to play the traitor with you, I perceive.”

“ You allude to the events of last night,”

said Althea; “and I could now persuade myself that it was an unreal fantasy of mine own brain that terrified me, had not your maidens intimated that others had seen the same appearance, and that it is, in fact, one of the domiciliary horrors of Calgarth Hall.”

“Ay, it is as I supposed, Althea Woodville, you had listened to these gossips’ tales till your heated imagination has pictured to you, with a strong resemblance of reality, the unreal and the impossible, if, indeed, it were not as I more than suspect, that you had fallen asleep in your chair, and been scared by an ugly dream.”

“Nay, madam,” replied Althea, “it must be evident to you that I had made too short a sojourn at Calgarth Hall to have imbibed any of its local superstitions; in fact, what opportunity had I of so doing, since you must be conscious I had not heard them from yourself or your brother, and with your servants I had had no communication.”

“ You, then, positively affirm, Althea, that you never had the least hint of a foolish story current in the house respecting skulls.”

“ I never had the slightest intimation of such a nature till last night, after I had been alarmed by the apparition of two skulls upon my reading table, when I heard, or rather guessed, from the exclamations and gestures of your female servants, that others had seen the like ghastly spectacle before.”

Mrs. Kezia mused for some moments, and then rising from her chair, said :

“ It is plain to me that some cunning knave, for a hidden purpose, employed himself in playing upon the credulity of my household, and I will bend the whole force of my mind to the unravelling this mystery withal.”

“ But, wherefore should I have been selected as a fit subject for such idle mum-mery ?” asked Althea. “ I who, as a stranger, could have no concern with the motives which

may have induced some one to inspire your servants with supernatural terrors?"

"That was a masterpiece of art. Your alarm has produced a more powerful effect on the minds of the household than any fresh evidence of their own respecting the appearance of these skulls, which have never yet been exhibited before me, though my brother, worthy Master Nobbs, and every other inhabitant of Calgarth Hall, bear witness that they are occasionally to be seen."

"Can it be possible that they all should have been deceived?"

"Not only possible, my child, but extremely probable, seeing that they are, for the most part, persons of weak judgment, and either—as is the case with the servants—ignorant and strongly tinctured with superstition, or of a gloomy and melancholic turn, like my brother, which temperament doth afford peculiar facilities to be worked upon by such doings, more particularly as from some

circumstances unnecessary to recount I forbear naming, I am convinced that these skulls are produced for his especial annoyance."

The conference was interrupted by an eager tap at the door :

" Come in," said Mrs. Kezia ; " and Milly Hill bounded into the room in her travelling hood and cloak, exclaiming :

" My dear, dear mistress, are you safe and well ?" and throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, covered Althea's hands with kisses, and sobbed aloud.

" My good Millicent, I am rejoiced to see you ; but how came you here ?" said Althea, patting the round red cheek of the weeping and laughing maiden.

" Oh, my lady, it was such a lucky chance ; for while I stood weeping and wailing, and wringing my hands in the court-yard of the inn, wondering what was to become of me, a horn blew, and a lot of folks came pouring in, crying : 'South waggon fra' Lon-

non be cooming,' and all the Garstang people came to receive parcels and hear London news, or send parcels on to Lancaster, Kendal, or Carlisle. At last the waggon, with six horses, drove in, and stopped there to rest men and cattle till six o'clock. Said I, 'Will the waggon take me to Calgarth Hall ?'

“‘ Na, but it will to Kendal,’ said the landlord ; “ and thou’ll get to Colegorth Haugh fra’ Kendal by sma’ carrier’s cart or pack-horse.’

“ Then I asked the waggoner to take me to Kendal, and my two boxes, which that ill-favoured churl, Bethuliel, had cast off the coach, whereby the lock of one was broken, and the hinge of the other, to add to my troubles.

“‘ Thou wilt have to sleep at Lancaster to-night, my lass, and at Kendal to-morrow, for we are slow travellers, and the fare is a crown.’

“I paid him, and we jogged on to Lancaster, where I slept indifferently well, for the barber-surgeon, who attended your lady mother, was a passenger to Lancaster, and vastly civil, and took me to sup, sleep, and breakfast at his sister’s house, who is the wife of the town-clerk of Lancaster. She made me very welcome, and gave me a line to her husband’s mother in Kendal, Mrs. Barbara Dowdeswell, at the King’s Arms, and there I supped and slept, and started off this morning, at five o’clock, behind an honest packman, who was, as good-luck would have it, bringing goods to this very house, ordered by the colonel himself, or I should never have been allowed to pass the gates. But the porter thought I was his daughter.”

“Well done, Milly, if that is your name,” cried Mrs. Kezia Briggs, who had been deeply interested in her artless tale. “You are a faithful maiden to your young lady, and a brave lass withal, to follow her up so

sharply. But what have you done with your two boxes?"

"I sat on the large one in the waggon, madam, and kept the other under my feet till I was set down at the King's Arms, Kendal. Mrs. Dowdeswell, landlady, has promised to nail both down, and send them by the carrier's cart," said Milly.

"Very well, I will order that they be taken in, and you shall be well lodged and cared for, my good girl," observed Mrs. Kezia Briggs, kindly. "You are come in happy hour, for your lady has been wearying for you, and you must do your best to make her comfortable. No one here understands how to dress her in her fallals, nor to comb and curl her long locks."

"God forbid that I should be skilled in such sinful arts," exclaimed Kerenhappuch, who now entered to see after her mistress.

"They are not required of thee, Kerenhappuch," rejoined Mrs. Kezia; "but I trust

thou wilt let this maiden have a comfortable breakfast with thee, in my dressing-room, after she leaves her lady's chamber."

Kerenhappuch cast an ominous scowl on the young blooming Milly, and tossed up her head as she followed her mistress out of the room.

Milly hastily locked the door after them, then approaching her lady very closely, she whispered :

" I could not tell you, my dear mistress, before them, all that has happened, but I have brought you a letter which, I hope, will please you."

" A letter for me! and from whom?" asked Althea, in surprise.

" From Major Philipson, his own self, my lady," replied Milly, extricating the precious document from her bosom as she spoke.

" How happened you and Major Philipson to meet?" asked Althea, as she curiously surveyed the letter.

“ It was in Kendal, my lady, last night, as I was stepping down the ladder into the King’s Arms yard, he dashed up to the waggon-office to receive his letters and diurnals, and hear London news. Much surprised was he to see me, and very pleased to hear I was going to seek you at Calgarth Hall, and asked if I would take a letter to you from him. And he told me, my lady, all about the dismal peril from which he delivered you in crossing the sands, and how he suspected that some of Colonel Briggs’s people that took the horses from the coach to make their escape were drowned, not knowing the proper track. This morning, by five o’clock, he brought the letter for you, and set me on the pillion behind Packman Hobbes, and bore us in company as far as Bowness, where his boat was waiting to take him to Holme Island.

The letter was addressed : “ To the most noble lady, Mrs. Althea Woodville, of Lance-

field Court, in the county of Shropshire, abiding, at this present, at Calgarth Hall, in the county of Westmoreland."

On breaking the three seals of rose-coloured wax, duly impressed with three tiny cupids, kneeling, and holding up their hands in an attitude of entreaty, she read as follows :

" MOST LOVELY AND BELOVED ALTHEA,—
If you loved me not before, out of regard to myself, it will be passing strange if you do it not now, from the circumstance of your having no other divertissement in the dull sameness of Calgarth Hall, and also because it is not possible for you to domicile with Bat Briggs without considering him the most hateful and unlovable personage that ever stalked in belted buff; and withal, resolving hourly that if ever you condescend to love and marry any man, it shall be that man who, of all the world, is the most unlike him, which fortunate mortal is, I trust, your devoted lover, Robert Philipson.

“ Althea, my best title to your favour consists in my being his perfect antipodes in mind, manners, and person. Pardon the rude manner of my wooing—it is an untaught soldier’s fashion ; yet the fashion of one who loves you well, and would adventure life or limb to deliver you out of the clutches of that gaunt wolf, our unbeloved cousin, Bat, if you would but speak the word.

“ Beautiful Althea, grant me but the trifling favour of hanging a white scarf or kerchief from the window of thine own apartment, that I may enjoy the happiness of knowing whither to turn my eyes in search of thee when I am roving in my skiff over Windermere water ; and if thou wilt not do this out of regard to me, yet do it to ensure thine own safety, sweet one, since I have vowed at the shrine of our Lady of the Holme not to leave one pane or quarrel of glass entire in the windows of Calgarth Hall, save those of thy chamber, and that in the

banqueting hall, emblazoned with the escutcheons of my worthy ancestors, Sir Miles Philipson, and Jane Laborne, his spouse.

“ Fare thee well, lady, for a while, and forget not that Robert Philipson is, with all his faults, a true cavalier, and thy cousin but by four removes, which is a near kin in the warm-hearted north. Thine—R. P.

“ Postscriptum.—Send a glance from thy bright eyes, and a sigh from thy dear lips, towards Holme Island nightly, ere thou seekest thy pillow, lady mine, and though unseen and unheard, they shall be safely speeded to me by some kind sylph of the lake, and I will repay them forthwith a thousand-fold. I will not pray thee not to forget me, for I will render it impossible for any one in Calgarth Hall to do that; and I will live in the bold hope that ere long the voices of carabines, musketoons, and drakes of mine shall be music to thine ear, since they will give loud tidings of my near ap-

proach. Once more, farewell. I kiss the paper that will shortly be touched by thy fair fingers. Ah, happy paper! I send thee forth envying thy bliss."

Althea's cheeks crimsoned and dimpled as she perused this curious epistle.

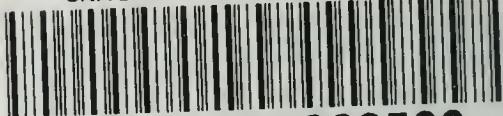
"Saw ever noble lady a love letter like this?" she said to herself. "I marvel at his audacity in thus addressing me." And then she reperused its contents, and laughed outright as she recalled to her memory the fantastical euphuistical strain of *billet-doux* compounded after the duly authorized recipes pervading such compositions.

END OF VOL. I.

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